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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ

ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



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**Project**  
**“ FRIENDLY DESTINATIONS FOR SENIORS + 55”**  
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**TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
FOR SENIORS 55 +,  
AIMED TO BUSINESS, SOCIAL  
AND THE CIVIL SECTOR**



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
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БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	4
I. Analysis of the current situation .....	10
II. Tourist Market in Vidin, Montana and Dolj Districts.....	14
2.1. Facilities for sheter and accommodation in Vidin District.....	14
2.2. Facilities for shelter and accommodation in Montana District.....	16
2.3. Facilities for shelter and accommodation in Dolj District .....	17
2.4. Tourism and leisure activities suitable for tourists of age over 55 in Vidin, Montana and Dolj Districts .....	19
2.5 Nature of tourist visits .....	21
2.6 Target market .....	22
III. The tourist market in Vidin, Montana and Dolj District.....	25
3.1. SWOT Analysis.....	25
IV. Strategic Plan .....	29
4.1. Strategic Approach .....	29
4.2. Strategic objectives.....	30
4.3. Main directions of development of the tourist product for tourists over 55 years of age in the region of Vidin, Montana and Dolj Districts.....	32
4.4. Basic startegic priorities .....	33
4.5. New tourism development model for tourists of age over 55 in the Vidin, Montana and Dolj Districts .....	34
V. Strategic management plan for the new tourist product for tourists of age over 55 .....	37



Съдържанието на този материал не представлява непременно официалната позиция на Европейския съюз



5.1. Mission and vision for the development of the tourist product for tourists of age over 55 in the three districts .....	37
5.2. The strategic vision and its elements .....	38
5.3. Strategic Objectives and Corresponding Activities .....	39
5.3.1. Priorities for "development of tourism products" .....	41
5.3.2. Priorities for the development of "marketing and promotional activities" .....	41
5.3.3. Priorities for the development of the 'quality' .....	42
5.3.4. Priorities for the development of 'institutions' .....	43
VI. Analysis of the policy of tourist service providers towards tourists over 55 - problems, opportunities and recommendations .....	43
VII. Tourist Animation.....	50
VIII. Marketing and Advertising .....	52
IX. Promotion Plan .....	53
X. Good European Practices .....	57
XI. Indicative routes and development services for tourism for people over 55 in Vidin, Montana and Dolj Districts.....	65
11.1 Proposals for tourist route for tourists of age over 55 in Vidin, Montana and Dolj Districts.....	66
XII. Model for monitoring the tourist product for tourists of age over 55 .....	76
Conclusion .....	78
Bibliography .....	79



ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
• ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК •

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an extremely important sector for the development of the economy of each region. The development of tourism in the region of Vidin Municipality and Montana Municipality is strategically linked to the development of tourism in Bulgaria as a whole, and the development of tourism in Dolj County is related to the overall development of tourism in Romania. In fact, the development of the tourism sector in both countries has a huge impact on the growth of the relatively smaller tourism services sector in the region of Vidin and Montana districts, Bulgaria, as well as in the Dolj County, Romania.

The potential for tourism development in the region of Vidin, Montana and Dolj is more than obvious, both in terms of geographical location, cultural - historical and natural heritage, and in terms of the relative advantages that the three districts have. For these reasons, the tourism development strategy for tourists of age over 55 in the three districts should be seen as an opportunity for improvement "across all fronts".

The tourism sector in Romania and Bulgaria, driven mainly by private interests, actually responds to some of the market needs of consumers and is, to some extent, considered to even satisfy the requirements of the foreign market rather than the requirements of the national market, a market that actually has significant potential.

To date, the need and importance of having a strategy to guide tourism development has been identified in both the public and private sectors.

It is precisely the development of tourism potential that can contribute to the rapid and sustainable consolidation of the three districts as a popular cross-border tourist destination. Indicative in this respect is the growth rate of the number of regional projects of national and transnational importance. For the period January - June 2019 the total number of tourist visits of foreigners in Bulgaria is 3 632 561. There is a decrease of 0.3% compared to the period January - June 2018. For the first half of 2019 most of tourists that are visiting Bulgaria are Romanians - 575 609 people, followed by





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
• ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК •

Greeks, Turkish and Macedonian tourists. In January - May 2019, international tourism revenues amounted to EUR 854 million, an increase compared to January - May 2018 amounting to 3,3%. According to Romania's National Tourism Statistics, 2.2 million are registered as foreign tourists in 2018. The total contribution of tourism to the Romanian economy, which also takes into account the investments and expenditures identified by the sector, is around EUR 15.3 billion in 2018, up 8.4% compared to 2017. Analysis of the statistical data shows that the tourism sector has a significant impact on the economy of both countries.

Tourism is one of the largest industries and an important part of the world economy. In addition, tourism is embedded in complex structures and business frameworks defined by global transformations. In the course of demographic change, the tourism segment for the tourists over 55 years is becoming increasingly important. There is a trend of declining birth rates and increasing life expectancy, leading to a change in the age structure in European countries. In this context, the markets for tourist services are subject to various changes. Therefore, concepts, infrastructure and services need to be changed in the coming years. Currently, tourism business representatives are looking for more information on how markets for tourists over 55 will develop in the future. In addition, many destinations are still lacking adequate infrastructure for the elderly, and there is a demand for specialized tourism products in this segment. In the future, tourism service providers will need to adapt to the new requirements with appropriate proposals.

This strategy is a medium-term planning document that contains proposals for businesses, the civil sector and guidance to stakeholders on how to be more competitive in the tourism market and provide adequate services to meet the demand of 'third-age' tourists. The Strategy contains good European practices for working with tourists of age over 55, proposals for three cross-border tourist routes for tourists over 55 and proposals for their promotion. The purpose of this document is to support the development of a tourism product for people over 55 through concrete proposals to



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businesses and the civil sector. The guidelines and recommendations contained in the Strategy will enable stakeholders to be more competitive in the tourism market, to provide products and services on the tourism market that are adequate for tourists seeking. The strategy will take into account the results of the studies carried out on the development of tourism for adults over 55 years and on the analyzes and assessments of the needs and preferences of tourists age of over 55 in Vidin and Montana Districts, Republic of Bulgaria and in the County of Dolj, Romania.

The setting up of such a unified strategy is imperative, not because the segment for tourists over 55 cannot develop without such a strategy, but because without such a strategy the full exploitation of the opportunities available for cross-border tourism will not be best used. These options are as follows:

1. Increasing recognition of the cross-border region as a tourism destination by people over 55 living in Bulgaria, Romania and other EU Member States;
2. A set of trends that clearly recognize that resources in the region of Vidin, Montana, Bulgaria and Dolj, Romania have relatively high tourism potential for the development of a common cross-border tourism product for tourists over 55;
3. Slowly increasing costs in the formation of tourist offers compared to competing tourist regions within the two countries;
4. An opportunity to increase the tourist flow as a result of the newly created and widely promoted new cross-border routes for tourists of age over 55;
5. Favorable geographical location of the Vidin, Montana and Dolj districts;

This strategic document has been prepared using a standard conceptual framework for strategic planning and includes the following main steps and actions:

1. gathering the necessary background information and analysis;
2. definition of strategic framework, vision, priorities, strategic goals
3. development of an action plan.

There are three main approaches to strategic planning:



ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



The first approach is that in regional, local and international politics, tourism is often not conducted individually but integrated into the policies of other sectors of the economy. Tourism organizations are an integral part of the overall economic and social system of the three districts. Tourism is affected by the state of tourism-related industries, service industries, etc.

Secondly, the development of the tourism sector requires concentration of significant financial resources and implies the presence of a significant number of participants, both at the stage of investment policy formation, at the construction and reconstruction of the existing tourist base and infrastructure, and at the stage of functioning of the individual tourist structure. Considering good practices, the highest return on investment is achieved in the formation of a competitive integrated tourism product, which implies the presence of well-developed accompanying infrastructure and expertise at all stages of the creation and implementation of tourist services.

The second approach is based on the fact that autonomous tourism development strategies are developed for the territories characterized by high tourist attractiveness, with developed tourism sector. This approach is appropriate in cases where tourism development is expected to promote a dynamic and balanced development of the administrative-territorial units, since the strategy (plan) focuses mainly (in this case on the development, affirmation and promotion of a new tourism product for tourists age of over 55, which will help to increase the competitiveness of the territory.

The third approach takes into account the fact that often attractive tourist sites are located on the border or fall into more than one administrative-territorial unit, which necessitates close interaction and cooperation between them. In this approach, tourism development requires coordinated actions. This is especially true for municipalities with limited financial capacity. Strengthening such cooperation contributes significantly to the development of tourism, since the overall effect will be higher than if an individual municipality works independently. In this context, the





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



current strategy, which aims to promote the tourism potential of the three cross-border regions and create conditions for the development of cross-border tourism for people of age over 55, will include:

- Creating and offering attractive for this segment tourists, tourist business image through general advertising and information activity;
- Development and marketing of a cross-border tourist product for tourists of age over 55;
- Creating conditions for tourist development of individual settlements from the three cross-border districts;
- Awareness of the tourism business in the three districts as to what adult tourists of age over 55 are looking for so that it can meet their specific needs.
- Information and scientific-methodological support of the activities of tourist organizations from the three districts.

In developing this strategic document, an assessment was initially made of the tourism market, the demand for tourism products and services from tourists of age over 55, the tourism potential of the three districts, the available tourism resources, the tourism business and human resources in the cross-border area, based on which strategic tourist locations are identified (zones and sites) in the cross-border region. Based on these analytical and evaluation procedures, a strategy for tourism development for people of age over 55 in the cross-border region has been developed. This strategic document aims, first and foremost, to create and develop fruitful partnerships in the field of developing a sustainable tourism product for tourists of age over 55 in the cross-border area and secondly to make the cross-border region a desirable destination for tourists of age over 55.





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
• ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК •

## I. ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

Vidin and Montana districts of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Dolj district of Romania are peripheral to both countries in geographical and economic terms. They cover predominantly backward rural areas, characterized by an aging population and deep social, economic and infrastructure problems. This calls for mechanisms to support the local and regional economy, based on a more complete absorption of local development potential (cultural - historical, natural, human and economic resources) in order to improve the lives of people in the cross-border region. One of the important advantages of these territories is the presence of significant but not yet used adequately natural tourist potential, extremely rich cultural and historical heritage, as well as the presence of mineral springs in the region, which are an essential prerequisite and resource for the development of sustainable tourism for people of the "third age". In order to identify and establish this territory as a promising tourist destination for this segment of tourists, long-term focused work is needed with all participants working in the tourism sector. Tourist sites and services offered in the area could attract tourist interest to tourists of age over 55 if competitive and attractive tourist products were developed.

The membership of Bulgaria and Romania in the EU creates favorable opportunities for joint coping with the serious socio-economic problems in the border regions. In this respect, an important role is given to cross-border cooperation between the two countries, aimed at making more effective use of the benefits and local development potential through bilateral partnership. In this sense, the development of this strategic document can give additional impetus to the overall development of the municipalities in the three districts.

Other direct and indirect benefits of implementing the strategic document are:

- increasing the contribution of tourism to the regional economy of the three cross-border areas;





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
•ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК•

- supporting local development by deepening cross-border contacts between community representatives in the border areas of the Dolj district and the Vidin and Montana districts;
- promoting the benefits of developing successful and sustainable practices for tourists of age over 55;
- diversification of services for tourists of age over 55 and the inclusion of untapped tourism potential.

The specific problems that will be addressed with this Strategy are related to the following:

- implemented detailed inventory, systematization, analysis and evaluation of the tourism potential of the three target districts and the possibility of developing a new segment for tourists of age over 55 years on the tourist market;
- a concept has been developed defining the coordinated development of tourism for tourists of age over 55 based on strategic planning in a cross-border context;
- providing all stakeholders with systematic information on sustainable tourism development opportunities for tourists of age over 55 in the target region;
- diversification and improvement of tourism supply through the development and promotion of a joint product for the three target regions for tourists over 55 years.
- creating opportunities to improve the lives of local communities in the region through the rational use and conservation of tourism potential and the establishment of effective cross-border partnerships.
- the use of modern technologies for tourist information in the three districts for tourist infrastructure / installation of smart spots (points)/.

At present Bulgaria and Romania in general and in particular the districts of Vidin and Montana, Bulgaria and Dolj County, Romania are developing the tourist market due to the market orientation of the private sector economic agents, as private companies are much more active than the various state-owned companies and municipal authorities responsible for tourism development. The state and municipal authorities in the





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
• ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК •

tourism market have a connection with the tourism sector, first of all with regard to the issuing of licenses for various tourist and tour operator activities, as well as with regard to the advertising of the country as a whole at a number of foreign tourist exhibitions.

Public sector activities, which are primarily related to the regulation of the tourism market, are rather supportive and not subject to an integrated and comprehensive plan for the development of the tourism sector.

Professional organizations that are acting in the tourism sector have repeatedly stated that the whole sector needs a unified strategic approach. In fact, many of these professions have been able to present on different occasions their views on what should be the main elements of such a strategy. At present, however, the efforts of these organizations are diverse, do not aim at one and the same, and accordingly integrating the proposals made into a single document is an extremely challenging.

Over the past few years, a limited number of new or renovated sites and buildings have been appearing in the districts of Vidin and Montana and in Dolj County, Romania, while no specific offers for the development of tourism products in the region have been submitted to international tour operators. The international tourist operators, who monitor the development of the Bulgarian and Romanian markets as a tourist destination, have shown unequivocally that the appearance of Bulgaria and Romania on the map of international tourism is determined primarily by the construction of tourist attractions and buildings on the Black Sea coast (Varna, Burgas, Sozopol, Nessebar, Golden Sands, etc., Bulgaria and Constanta, Mamaia, Mangalia, Eforie Nord, Neptune and Olympus, Romania) and in some mountain ski resorts (Poiana Brasov and Sinaia, Romania and Bansko and Borovets, Bulgaria). Statistics show that both countries are attracting a growing number of foreign tourists.

The current situation on the tourism market is a reflection of the fact that over the years the interests of private companies and the interests of public authorities have been moving in parallel but not intersecting. This, of course, affects the tourist



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



development of the Vidin and Montana districts, Bulgaria and Dolj County, Romania in view of the current inability to capitalize on the available assets, and in view of the lack of a strong tourist flow due to the lack of promotion of the three districts as an attractive tourist destination.

At present, the three districts of Vidin, Montana and Dolj are not recognizable as tourist destinations, neither for international tourist operators, nor for a large part of Bulgarian and Romanian citizens, although they have the necessary resources and excellent indicators.

On the other hand, what pulls the development of the sector back is an outdated and depreciated material base. Lack of timely information and strategy for attracting guests from neighboring countries for cultural events organized and held in the three districts. Another problem is the lack of a strategy for the transit of guests in the cross-border region, intrigued by the cultural, historical and natural heritage.

The fact that a significant proportion of micro and small businesses registered in the tourism sector do not make a profit is due to the lack of tourist flow in the cross-border area and the generally low solvency of the population in the three districts. Therefore, at present, the sector is still underdeveloped in all three target districts, despite all the things that would logically take the districts forward.

One of the opportunities that could support the development of the sector is the creation of permanent fairs and other cultural events related to specific historical dates that attract tourists over 55 and other guests, with the aim of promoting cultural exchange and bringing people together in the cross-border region, which would also have a positive effect.

Another option that would help the development of the tourism sector is investing in staff training so that they can respond to customer needs. This is completely achievable thanks to the training and qualification opportunities offered by various European programs.





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



In the end, successful combination of resources could activate the development of various forms of tourism that are suitable for people of age over 55 such as ecotourism, rural, wine, cultural and historical tourism, spa and bio-healing and act as an incentive to curb the leakage of trained staff from tourism to the rest of the world and major resort centers and the introduction and utilization of the new information technologies and the Internet for the purposes of promotion, advertising, marketing of the three districts as a common destination for tourist of age over 55 years.

## II. TOURIST MARKET IN VIDIN, MONTANA AND DOLJ DISTRICTS

### 2.1. Facilities for shelter and accommodation in Vidin District

Registered accommodation capacity in Vidin district, according to NSI statistics in May 2019 are 28 places of accommodations. The number of beds is 843. Total revenue from nights spent in Vidin district in May 2019 amounts to BGN 6 346, incl. income from nights spent by foreigners - BGN 1235. Compared to May 2018, the total number of beds operated during the period is increased by 1.7%. The total number of nights in all accommodation establishments registered in May 2019 was 6346 thousand, or 11.0% more than in the same month of the previous year, with the largest increase in nights (by 26.4%) in 3 and 4 star accommodations.

The survey includes categorized hotels, campsites and other short-stay accommodation with more than 10 beds operating during the reporting period. Other short-stay accommodation includes villas and tourist settlements, hostels, guest houses, bungalows, holiday homes, chalets, private lodgings and apartments and other short-stay accommodation.

In practice, the actual number of beds offered by shelters and accommodation units is higher than that registered, because not only shelters and accommodation units that are subject to categorization should be considered here, but those





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
• ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК •

accommodations that are not required to submit information to the National Statistical Institute also.

With regard to the quality of existing accommodation, it is reflected by the categorization of hotels. In particular, the entire hotel infrastructure in Vidin district is in principle overvalued (as it is in all districts of the country) compared to the international standards for categorization of infrastructure in the hotel industry.

Most of the accommodations are of the type of hotel or guest house (65%), followed by hotels + restaurant with a share of 15%, campsites hostels and other places, each with 20%. There is currently no 5-star hotel in Vidin district, the most rated being the Skalite Hotel (4 \*). The rest of the hotels are mostly rated in the 3 \* and 2 \* category, there are also hostels.

Most of the accommodations in Vidin district have between 1-5 and 5-10 employees, while some of the accommodation units have between 10 and 50 employees.

In most accommodation establishments the staff speaks English, but there are also places where the staff does not speak any foreign language.

Over the past few years, the number of restaurants, cafes, fast food restaurants and similar accommodation has increased significantly.

Over the last few years, significant progress has been made in the development of the tourism sector in Bulgaria with regard to the creation of a large number of shelter and accommodation facilities and to some extent the accommodation infrastructure. However, there is a significant gap in the maintenance of this infrastructure, as various marketing studies show that the users of tourist services indicate that the hotel service is at a very low level, that the qualifications and skills of the service staff create a negative image on the overall a tourist experience.

## 2.2. Facilities for shelter and accommodation in Montana District



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
• ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК •

Registered accommodation capacity in the Montana district, according to NSI statistics in May 2019 are 24. The number of beds is 1131. Total revenue from overnight stays in Montana District in May 2019 amounts to BGN 5263, incl. income from nights spent by foreigners - BGN 754. Compared to May 2018, the total number of beds operated during the period is decreased by 2.5%. The total number of nights in all accommodation establishments registered in May 2019 was 5263 thousand, or 4.4% more than in the same month of the previous year, with the largest increase in nights being observed in accommodation establishments with 3 and 4 stars.

The survey includes categorized hotels, campsites and other short-stay accommodation with more than 10 beds operating during the reporting period. Other short-stay accommodation includes villas and tourist settlements, hostels, guest houses, bungalows, holiday homes, chalets, private lodgings and apartments and other short-stay accommodation.

Most of the accommodations are of hotel type or guest house (80%), followed by hotels that have a restaurant, they have a share of 11%, hostels and other accommodations have a share of 9%. In the Montana district, like in Vidin, there is no 5-star hotel, with the best rated being the Ata Hotel (4 \*) and the Medicus Hotel (4 \*) in Varshets. The other hotels are mostly rated in categories 3 and 2\*.

Most of the accommodations in the Montana district have between 1-5 and 5-10 employees, and some of the accommodations have between 10 and 50 employees.

In most accommodation establishments the staff speaks English, but there are some where the staff does not speak any foreign language.

Due to the capacity of the hotel base in the Montana District, the estimated number of functioning hotels in 2019 is 24, and for the past few years the number of restaurants, cafes, fast food establishments and other similar accommodation facilities has increased.

### 2.3. Facilities for shelter and accommodation in Dolj County



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Compared to May 2018, in May 2019 Romania has registered an increase of foreign tourists, visitors to the county by 8.0%, as well as an increase of nights by 12.3%. The nights spent in accommodation facilities amounted to 2162.5 thousand, 12.3% more than in May 2018. In May 2019, Romanian tourists' nights are 75.4% of total nights, while foreign tourists' nights are 24.6%. Romania's tourism sector has a direct contribution of 5.21 billion euros to gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018, slightly higher than in 2017, placing Romania on the 32<sup>nd</sup> place in the world ahead of Slovakia and Bulgaria but after Greece and the Czech Republic.

In May 2019 the average length of stay is 2 days for both Romanian and foreign tourists, the net index of accommodation usage is 30.3% of the total tourist accommodation, an increase of 3.7 percentage points is observed here, compared to May 2018.

Most of the accommodations are of hotel + restaurant type (77.5%), followed by hotels with a share of 16.1%, hostels and other places, each with 3.2%. There are currently no 5-star hotels in Dolj County as well, with Ramada (4 +), Golden House, Plaza, Oltenia, Arlington Boutique, Europaka and Casa David (4 \*) being the best rated. The other hotels are mostly rated in the 3 \* category, as is the Sport Hostel. As can be seen from the advent of new hotels, the financial and economic crisis of 2007-2013 has not had a particular impact in this area, so investors' behavior is also optimistic. A new hotel was opened in 2007, three other hotels in 2008 and two new accommodations in 2011 and 2014.

Most of the accommodations in Dolj County (65.5%) have between 10 and 50 employees, followed by those with 1-5 and 5-10 employees 13,8%. Only in two hotels in Craiova are employed more than 50 employees, namely Ramada and Craiova. It is worth noting that almost all the staff of the locations in Craiova have higher education, speak several foreign languages, which greatly facilitates



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



communication and contact with foreign tourists who visit them. Of course, there are still some problems with communication and behavior.

Due to the capacity of the hotel base in Dolj, the approximate number of functioning hotels in 2019 is 51, and for the past few years the number of restaurants, cafes, fast food establishments and other similar accommodation facilities has increased.

#### **2.4. Tourism and leisure activities suitable for tourists of age over 55 in Vidin, Montana and Dolj Districts**

The cross-border region of Vidin - Montana - Dolj is characterized by the presence of great tourist potential. The available natural and anthropogenic resources are a prerequisite for the development of the region as a tourist destination, for year-round sustainable tourism, for tourists of age over 55 based on the unique identity characteristic of the cross-border region. At the same time as a border, the region is poorly developed economically and is little known as a tourist destination by foreign and even Bulgarian and Romanian tourists. The three districts have a rich cultural and historical heritage from Roman times and the Renaissance, which is well kept and preserved, with potential opportunities to become a tourist destination of interest. Traditions, crafts and old technologies that can be demonstrated today are preserved. There are unique natural and anthropogenic resources for the development of cultural, historical, eco, fishing, aquatic, spaleologic, balneological, rural tourism. The efforts of local businesses to develop the tourism sector are evident from the fact that in the hotels and restaurants sector in the three districts there is an increasing trend, despite their small share in the economy of the Northwest planning region, which gives rise to some optimism regarding tourism.

The cross-border region has a rich abundance of diverse natural environments, characterized by attractiveness and tourist appeal: rock phenomena, rich relief of





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



terrain with plains, karst hills, wetlands, mineral springs, rivers, lakes and swamps, unique ecosystems and attractive landscapes.

Within the boundaries of the area there are natural parks and protected areas. On the territory of the protected territories in Romania and Bulgaria there are numerous eco-paths and places for recreation. Various routes, river walks and hunting and fishing opportunities are available. The rich and diverse natural resources create favorable conditions for the development of alternative forms of tourism: cognitive; ecotourism; photo hunting; ornithologic; dendrologic; camping and adventure tourism. The presence of mineral springs creates conditions for the development of spa, wellness and recreational tourism, especially preferred by tourists over 55 years of age. There are mineral waters in the area of Varshets and Spanchevtsi. Varshets is an old and well-established balneo and spa center of national importance. There is also a mineral spring in the town of Berkovitsa and mineral waters in the Vidin - Slanotran - Koshava section, which have not yet been developed. In Romania, there are mineral springs in Zavala Mountain that are not well socialized for spa development and recreational tourism. All this creates preconditions for the development of spa tourism in the cross-border region.

The region is rich in anthropogenic resources that are suitable for year-round visitation. The cultural and historical heritage of the three districts dates from all historical eras: Palaeolithic and Neolithic artifacts, archeological, architectural, ethnographic and religious sites, monuments of totalitarian and contemporary art. Museums in the region have interesting exhibitions: archeological, ethnographic, artistic and documentary, which attract the interest of hundreds of thousands of tourists every year. The most distinctive country and attraction of the cross-border area is its unique identity, the living heritage and lifestyle of the local communities, the preserved traditions and folklore, the variety of customs, festivals and customs, traditional dishes and meals. Various crafts, culinary specialties, pagan and Christian customs and rituals have been preserved to this day. The variety of holidays and



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



festivals is a prerequisite for the development of cultural and event tourism, which is also suitable for tourists over 55 years of age.

From the above, it can be concluded that the tourist market for tourists of age over 55 in the region of Vidin, Montana and Dolj can be developed in several directions, the listed below are not fully exploited, but have a significant tourism development potential:

- Activities related to land - cave(spaleolgy), flora and fauna monitoring, horseback riding;
- Activities related to the Water related activities - swimming, water sports, fishing;
- Miscellaneous - balneology, spas, national parks, mineral springs, museum work, archeological and historical sightseeing, visits to churches and monasteries.

## 2.5 Nature of tourist visits

Compared to the neighboring districts of Vidin, Montana and Dolj, the competitive districts, including national and foreign ones, it is identified that the number of tourists arriving in the cross-border region has been steadily increasing over the past five years, but at a very slow pace. The most attractive for the Bulgarian and foreign visitors in Vidin district are identified, Baba Vida Fortress, Vidin Synagogue, Osman Pazvantoglu Mosque and Library, Cathedral of St. Dimitar from Thessaloniki, Magura Cave, Venetsa Cave (the Wreath), Konaka Museum, the Museum of Nature and Science - Belogradchik and Belogradchik Rocks and Castra Martis Fortress in Kula. For the Montana district, the most visited sites are the Lapidarium, the Castra ad Montanezium Ancient Fortress, the Mihaylova House, the Old Bath, the Montanezium City Park, the Ivan Vazov Museum House and the Berkovitsa Ethnographic Museum, the “St.St. Cyril and Methodius” Klisurski Monastery, St. John the Baptist Monastery and St. John of Rila Chiprovtsi Monastery. The most visited landmarks in Dolj County are the Oltenia Museum, Casa Baniei, the Museum of Art, Holy Trinity Church, Madonna Dudu



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



Church, “St. Dimitar” cathedral, Nicolae Romanescu Park, Botanical Garden, Kosuna Bukovatul Veki Monastery, Zhytianu Monastery and Maglavit Monastery, Cioroii Nou Roman Fortress, etc.

In developing the three cross-border tourist routes for tourists of age over 55, we will include the above-mentioned most visited sites from the three districts that are appropriate for this target group.

The above shows that the three districts of Vidin, Montana and Dolj have the necessary tourist attractions but are still too far in attracting visitors from rich countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Scandinavian countries, or even tourists from emerging markets like China and India, for example. In the three districts, the majority of visitors are still Bulgarian, Romanian, Greek, Turkish and Macedonian tourists and therefore the tourist market needs restructuring, diversification and market segmentation.

## 2.6. Target markets

It is obvious that the region of Vidin, Montana and Dolj should somehow shake off the old-fashioned understanding, which prevails on a national scale, that the traditional mass tourist product is a holiday on the Black Sea or in the ski resorts. The three districts have unique natural and anthropogenic resources to develop cultural, historical, eco, hunting, fishing, aquatic, spaleologic, balneological, rural tourism and tourism opportunities throughout the year, which is a prerequisite for positioning the three districts as an attractive tourist destination for tourists over 55 in the tourism sector. In addition, it is necessary to localize and fragment the tourist flows and activities by geographical topography. Target markets could therefore be viewed from two perspectives. On the one hand, these are the traditional tourism markets, which are mainly served by intermediaries (through proposals from different tour operators and through package offers), and on the other - these are specialized (targeted)



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



markets that meet the specific needs of the tourist and located in the region of Vidin, Montana and Dolj. In the development of the second type of markets, it is traditionally observed that more money is spent per capita than in the development of the market for traditional summer tourism. In this regard, the proposed target market groups / targets / could be the following:

1) **A tourist market gravitating around a specific geographical topography** - in this type of markets, a relatively large number of tourists visit the respective topos, with the region of Vidin, Montana and Dolj attracting a relatively insignificant percentage of tourists from Germany, the United Kingdom, Russia, Greece, France, Italy, Japan and Scandinavian countries, of which tourists are mainly of age over 55 years. For this reason, the three districts should be more frequently represented in these countries through international expo centers (to promote Vidin, Montana and Dolj as a common cross-border destination for tourists over 55 years of age) and to deepen positive cooperation with tourist intermediaries in the market. Reinforcement of the advertising message could be through the organization of regular "getting acquainted" meetings in the region as a tourist destination for tourists over 55 years or by organizing "Research tours for tourists of age over 55" outside the main tourist season. Therefore, the three districts need to maintain regular exchange of information (brochures, photo discs, leaflets, event information, etc.) with expo centers and tour operators from Bulgaria and Romania.

2) **Special interest tourist markets** - this represents the development of tourist activities for tourists of age over 55 in the different parts of the three districts, which can be offered throughout the 12 months of the year. The emphasis here should be on the organization of exhibition fairs with special participation of exhibitors developing different segments of the tourism industry. In addition to this advertising channel, it is also helpful to organize specialized advertising campaigns through publications in the specialized media and press that serve a particular market segment. Close interaction





with tourist operators and international tourism agencies from Bulgaria and Romania is recommended.

**3) Domestic tourism market in Bulgaria and Romania** - it is a market which is gradually becoming more active and for its development it is necessary to apply the formula for "year-round tourism" where it is possible to visit various tourist attractions. For the development of this market, special events should also be prepared and promoted, as well as presentations of individual elements of the region's historical and cultural past in order to provoke local tourists of age over 55 to visit the region.

In order to develop a **tourism product for tourists of age over 55**, a 'product segmentation' approach in the market must be taken. The specific consumer needs of tourists of age over 55 can be met with promotional packages. The scope of the "attack" in these markets should, on the one hand, aim at providing a variety of tourist routes in the three districts for every taste and for every age, and on the other, eliminating the seasonality factor in the offer of tourist products and services for people of age over 55.

### III. TOURIST MARKET IN VIDIN, MONTANA AND DOLJ DISTRICTS

In the framework of the analysis of the tourist market, the so-called toolkit "SWOT - analysis" (analysis of "strengths", "weaknesses", "opportunities" and "threats") was used with regard to the tourism sector and the services offered to tourists over age of 55 in the region of Vidin, Montana and Dolj and competition analysis of the internal environment within the national tourism market in Bulgaria and Romania.

#### 3.1. SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis presented is based on a set of information sources, documents and resources that correspond to evaluations from various studies. This SWOT analysis should not be seen as a static tool, but rather should be seen as a mechanism for



reporting on a yearly or semi-annual basis. The scope of the SWOT analysis aims to bring together the intentions of the public authorities for the development of the tourism sector, the views of private companies and non-governmental organizations operating in this market, the opinions of users of tourism products / services and other relevant and actual information.

**Table 1 SWOT analysis of tourism in the region of Vidin, Montana and Dolj Districts**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-favored respondents;</li> <li>• Clean and beautiful environment;</li> <li>• Interesting cultural and historical heritage;</li> <li>• Proximity to major markets for well-known tourist products / services;</li> <li>• Favorable geographical location of the CBC region;</li> <li>• Availability of various tourist resources (cultural heritage, historical monuments, mineral waters, natural beauties, etc.);</li> <li>• Extremely competitive prices;</li> <li>• Availability of newly built or renovated tourist accommodation;</li> <li>• National cuisine &amp; wines;</li> <li>• Existence of private sector tourism investments;</li> <li>• Recognition and perception of the needs for the modernization of the tourism sector;</li> <li>• "Safe" CBC destination;</li> <li>• Declared intentions of the government for the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant lack of an "accurate" picture of the presence of tourist attractions in the Vidin, Montana and Dolj districts;</li> <li>• Lack of branding of Vidin, Montana and Dolj districts as one common CBC destination;</li> <li>• Lack of a coherent strategy for tourism development in the three districts;</li> <li>• Lack of a common cross-border strategy for presenting the three districts as a common tourist destination for tourists of age over 55;</li> <li>• Limited market knowledge of the value of cultural and historical heritage;</li> <li>• Low level of development of CBC Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in the sector;</li> <li>• Frequent changes in the regulatory framework in the sector;</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge or little knowledge of the needs of local and regional consumers of age over 55 of tourism products / services;</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge or little knowledge of the needs of foreign consumers of age 55 years of tourist products / services;</li> <li>• Poorly developed Internet-based information system for marketing of the region;</li> </ul>



<p>development of tourism capital and historical heritage;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively high degree of disregard for the potential of the internal market;</li> <li>• Lack of integration of the various tourist products / package services (by activities, by seasonality, by other factors) into a common CBC product;</li> <li>• Lack of offers for tourists of age over 55;</li> <li>• Insufficient availability of experienced and well-trained foreign-language staff to meet the needs of tourists of age over 55;</li> <li>• Poorly developed tourism development infrastructure that does not meet the needs of people of age over 55;</li> <li>• Services in the tourism industry are below the desired quality level;</li> <li>• Lack of adequate and up-to-date tourist information for the region;</li> <li>• Lack of tourist information signboards;</li> <li>• Lack of adequate participation of regionally significant tourism exhibitions (including national and international);</li> <li>• Low level of monitoring of tourist sustainability indicators;</li> <li>• Lack of funds for campaigns to advertise and promote the three districts as a common tourist destination.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of adequate tourism potential of the three CBC regions;</li> <li>• Availability of resources to diversify the range of potential tourism products (tourism products / services of special interest, complementary tourism products / services, etc.);</li> <li>• Existence of the potential to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of continuity of local authorities with regard to the emphasis and manner of supporting tourism development and setting development priorities;</li> <li>• Legal complication of the legal framework due to the country's accession to the EU;</li> <li>• Lack of implementation of adequate planning for the development of certain tourist development zones;</li> <li>• Weak campaigns to promote the tourism</li> </ul>



<p>promote the three districts of Vidin, Montana and Dolj as a common tourist destination for people of age over 55;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unrealized potential for local tourists of age over 55;</li> <li>• Potential for organizing vacations and exchanging tourists on Saturday and Sunday between the two neighboring countries;</li> <li>• opportunity to create a cross-border tourism product for tourists of age over 55;</li> <li>• Improving the qualifications and skills of staff involved in the tourism industry for working with tourists over 55 years;</li> <li>• Possible absorption of European Structural Funds and other donor resources to promote the region and develop it as a destination for tourists of age over 55;</li> <li>• Improving the effectiveness of marketing and promotion of programs and activities;</li> <li>• Improving the overall image of the region as a tourist destination for tourists over 55 years of age;</li> </ul>	<p>sector in the region;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gradual loss of the biggest competitive advantage to date - low prices;</li> <li>• Lack of sufficient funding to deliver specialized advertisements and promotions to tourists of age over 55;</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge and information on the targeted market needs and needs of tourists of age over 55.</li> </ul>
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## IV. STRATEGIC PLAN

### 4.1. Strategic approach

So far, the vision for tourism development in the three districts is characterized by a lack of coordinated activities and the strategy is based on the following several principles:





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
•ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК•

1. "One-season" strategy instead of a longer-term strategy;
2. Changing the goals of the strategy and the direction of development in each season;
3. Implement a "multi-purpose" strategy for everything and everyone without a specific plan of action and without the necessary resources;
4. Implementation of a strategy for all niches in the tourism market, without giving precise definitions of the market goals and ways of achieving them;
5. A strategy that neglects the so-called "Market segmentation" where there is one price and one service that is valid for all users;
6. A strategy that involves many different efforts of institutions, donors, business, non-governmental organizations, without these efforts having a coordinated Vision for strategic tourism development in the three districts of Vidin and Montana, Bulgaria and Dolj County, Romania. In order to be successful, the strategy must be based on various established facts and patterns, and it is suggested that the following "constructive principles" would be observed:

1. The strategy also needs to include additional activities aimed at multiplying the effect of its implementation by complementing the individual activities.

2. The strategy should be implemented on the principle of mutual cooperation and involve joint actions by regional and local authorities, on the one hand, and the private and non-governmental sector, on the other, by the cross-border region of Bulgaria and Romania. These "constructive principles" can be further developed by pursuing several strategic goals such as:

1) Striving for sustainable development of the newly created tourism product for tourists of age over 55;

2) Striving for effective promotion and making popular of the three districts as a common cross-border tourist destination for tourists of age over 55;

3) Striving for the overall quality of the tourist products / services offered, which must be adequate for the needs of tourists of age over 55;





#### 4) Striving for sustainable economic and financial returns;

The implementation of these development principles requires the selection of a specific toolkit of activities that can be consistent with these principles and, at the same time, create a successful action plan that achieves the strategic objectives set.

## 4.2. Strategic objectives

The strategic objectives are based on the successful development of the potential of the cross-border region of Vidin, Montana and Dolj as a destination for tourists over 55 years of age, with the following several criteria being met:

- Firstly, to continue the policy of "market follow-up" in order to promote the three districts as attractive to a large number of local and foreign visitors over 55 years of age, which will help to increase the income in the tourism industry.
- Secondly, to initiate a policy for building CBC mutual support networks to develop and enrich the provision of tourist services to tourists over 55 years of age during the four seasons, thus expanding the market niche.
- On a third place, it is necessary to take action to unite the efforts of the business, civil sector and institutions of the three neighboring districts (Vidin, Montana and Dolj), creating an atmosphere for synergy and successful development of combining local with foreign tourist destinations for tourists over 55 years of age to be operated throughout the year.

Each of these strategic options requires a higher level of institutional engagement with the private sector in order to achieve more effective results. If viewed from the perspective of coherence in strategic actions, this strategy will be relatively more difficult to implement, as the achievement of the set goals requires a relatively longer period of engagement of the interests of a large number of "players" in the tourism market.



ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



The support provided by private investment in the tourism industry is relatively important for the implementation of the strategy. The promotion of tourism investment needs to happen under the auspices of government in a similar way to what other governments in the South Eastern Europe region do. This investment promotion should, of course, also include facilitating investors in the implementation of their projects. Tax incentives and e-services are an example of this type of promotion. Another major problem that needs to be addressed in terms of stimulating foreign investors is to adapt the legal and regulatory framework relevant to concession to different sites. In addition, further simplification of the bureaucratic procedures that local authorities impose on private businesses in their attempt to implement a project in the field of hotel, restaurant or tourism in general should be sought.

After approximately three tourist seasons (the period considered in this strategic plan), the strategic plan is expected to achieve the following results:

- promoting the tourist image of the Vidin, Montana and Dolj districts as a common tourist destination for tourists of age over 55;
- increase in tourist flow in the three districts;
- diversification and improvement of tourism services for tourists of age over 55, according to their needs and desires;
- creating a more stable network of private and public sector cooperation links in the field of tourism services for tourists of age over 55;
- ensuring a higher quality of service level by the tourist staff of tourists of age over 55, according to their needs;
- improving the level of customer satisfaction of age over 55 years.

#### **4.3. Main directions of development of the tourist product for tourists of age over 55 in the region of Vidin, Montana and Dolj**



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The following table provides a detailed description of the results that are expected to be achieved if the current strategy is implemented within the envisaged conversion period. Table-2 contains the indicative results that are expected to be achieved in the implementation of this strategy.

**Table 2 Basic strategic results**

<b>Description of activities</b>	<b>Results</b>
Increase foreign visitors in the three districts	+ 5 % per year
Increase the number of EU tourists	+ 5 % per year
Increase the number of nights spent by Bulgarian and Romanian tourists in the three districts.	+ 5 % per year
Increase the number of foreigners' overnight stays in the region.	+ 5 % per year
Increase the share of economically interested persons in the development of the tourism industry by promoting the three districts as a tourist destination for tourists of age over 55 years by the central government and local authorities.	To participate at least once a year in at least one international promotional event in the field of tourism.
To build the image of the three districts as a suitable destination with various products for tourists of age over 55 years.	To conduct research on the attitudes of foreigners over age of 55 at international exhibitions; To promote the three districts through various advertising techniques as a total destination for tourist of age over 55.
Increasing and improving the internet presence of the Vidin, Montana and Dolj districts.	Measure the annual number of visits to tourist-oriented web sites to serve the three districts and make efforts and take measures to increase these visits annually by 10%.



#### 4.4. Basic strategic priorities

In order to implement the strategy, the main parameters have been prioritized, which need to be monitored in the next three to five tourist seasons. There are nine key strategic priorities:

1. Quality;
2. Diversification;
3. PPP (public-private partnerships);
4. Promotion, branding, making popular, advertising;
5. EU funding;
6. New (digital) technologies;
7. Coordination of local authorities with the private and non-governmental sectors;
8. Investments.

The eight priority areas identified include activities related to the improvement of the following indicators:

- Cooperation between public authorities, non-governmental and private sectors in the field of tourism and promotion of the new tourism product for tourists of age over 55;
- Targeted promotion of the new product for tourists of age over 55 and tourist services, adequate to the needs of tourists of age over 55;
- Management of tourist destinations;
- Quality of the tourist product for tourists of age over 55 and quality of services offered to tourists of age over 55;
- Availability and use of tourist "intelligence";
- Use of new technologies;
- Training and development of human resources to meet the needs of tourists of age over 55.

The priority areas cannot be considered individually, but rather complement each other when creating an integrated tourism development plan for old tourists of age over 55.



ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
•ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК•

An overall plan needs to be developed, with a different focus on the different seasons of the year.

#### 4.5. New tourism development model for tourists of age over 55 in the Vidin, Montana and Dolj Districts

Priority evaluation of achievements through the so-called "Visible results" (which could be achieved as a result of reaching the targeted markets) should focus primarily on areas and zones of the Vidin, Montana and Dolj district with significant tourism potential. These areas are geographically zoned and the development of the tourism industry depends, rather, on the results achieved for each such area based on a set of assessment criteria set by local authorities in order to meet the objective needs of the tourism sector.

Strategically, the application of the principle of geographical segmentation should be beneficial to the tourism industry, in that different types of tourism services can be differentiated according to certain criteria.

These criteria can be:

- The main tourist areas;
- Urban focus on tourist flow;
- Newly developed tourist services;
- Newly developed tourist areas.

The development of tourism on a geographical basis can be viewed from three main points of view, but at the same time the following processes can take place:

1. Development of "hubs of tourism"
2. Development of "tourist corridors" and
3. Development of "tourist chains"

With the development of "tourist hubs", the main tourist flow is attracted by the sufficient number of accommodations available. Using a location as a "hub", i.e. as a major tourist attraction center, it creates prerequisites for an increasing number of visits to the





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
• ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК •

surrounding areas as well, with visitors being able to "commute", i.e. to travel each day in different directions, returning to the hub at the end of the day. Developing the concept of a "tourist hub" may be adequate in cities that offer a sufficient number of tourist attractions and resources to carry out tourism activities for tourists of age over 55.

With the development of "tourist corridors", the main stream of tourist activities is subjected to a detailed study, and the object of study is the so-called "tourist zone of interest" that attracts the largest number of visitors. As a result of the analysis, a strategy is developed to promote the individual attractions and activities that can be initiated along the "tourist corridor". In the case of the Vidin, Montana and Dolj districts, this could be a "tourist corridor" along the line: Montana - Vidin - Craiova. Along this corridor, some unique natural resources can become a major attraction center for over 55-year-old tourists for short-term vacations and can be integrated into "tourist chains" that encourage tourists to spend an extra day (or night) , or a number of hours of the day along the "tourist corridor". Particular attention should be paid here to the "tourist corridor" along the natural axis of the second bridge over the Danube.

With the development of the so-called "tourist chains" refers to the attraction of a relatively large number of tourists in a wide range of recognizable tourist locations and / or destinations that are linked to one another, forming a naturally closed "chain" of tourist visits. In applying the concept of the "tourist chain", the idea is that tourists have the opportunity to start their visit from any point of that "chain" and to be able to end their visit again from any point of that "tourist chain". This idea of the "tourist chain" has worked extremely successfully in targeting the market for short-term family vacations for people of age over 55. Another advantage of implementing the "tourist chain" is that the tourist has the opportunity to visit different locations and go through different tourist attractions, without having to return the same route when planning his next visit. The length of the "tourist chain" needs to be planned in such a way that it can be used mainly by tourists with their own road transport within two to three days, the main idea being that the days that fall are fully used in the so-called "weekend" (Saturday and Sunday) and the days that are





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
• ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК •

"around" this weekend: for example, Friday and Saturday, or Sunday and Monday. From the Analysis and Assessment of Needs and Preferences of Adult Tourists of age over 55 in the Vidin, Montana and Dolj Districts, we found that tourists of age over 55 also practice weekend tourism, so such planning is relevant to this target group.

For the next three years, it is rational for the towns of Vidin, Montana and Craiova to be transformed into a tourist hub, from which start the "tourist corridors" and "chains" for tourists over 55.

## V. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE NEW TOURIST PRODUCT FOR TOURISTS OF AGE OVER 55

### 5.1. Mission and vision for the development of the tourist product for tourists of age over 55 in the three districts

Public authorities have a significant role to play in improving the economic climate and stimulating economic agents when it comes to a development of a tourism product for tourists of age over 55. It is necessary for public authorities at local, regional and cross-border level to provide a normal business environment for economic operators to generate economic profit and return from tourism development. Creating a comfortable business environment is one of the mechanisms through which various marketing and business activities in the region of Vidin, Montana and Dolj can be coordinated in a professional and legal way, which activities should aim to turn the three regions into a common cross-border tourist destination for high quality for tourists of age over 55. Strategic actions should be consistent with the mission and vision of the regional public authorities responsible for developing sustainable tourism.

- **Mission:**

To encourage cross-border cooperation between public authorities, the non-governmental sector and businesses from Bulgaria and Romania in such a way as to create conditions for the development and promotion of a quality and sustainable tourism product





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



for tourists of age over 55 in the three districts, both home and for foreign tourists, including those from the European Union.

- **Vision:**

To make the three cross-border districts a common cross-border tourist destination for tourists over 55 years of age of international importance in terms of offering quality tourism in the four seasons of the year, while respecting both the creation of environmental and cultural sustainability and sustainability of the economic return from the pursuit of tourist activities.

## 5.2. Strategic vision and its elements

The overall synthesis of the strategic vision is in the context of the implementation framework of the strategic guidelines for the promotion of a common cross-border tourism product for tourists of age over 55 in the region of Vidin, Montana and Dolj Districts.

### Objectives of the strategy:

- Create a time-resistant tourism product for tourists of age over 55;
- To build a strong and competitive tourism sector that offers quality services for tourists of age over 55;
- Develop the three districts as a common high quality destination for tourists of age over 55;
- Implement a profitable marketing strategy to make the three districts a preferred destination for tourists of age over 55;

### Overall strategic vision:

- To create and maintain a recognizable image of the three districts of Vidin, Montana and Dolj as a high quality tourist destination for tourists of age over 55 with sustainable development of all natural, cultural, archeological, historical and economic resources.





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
• ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК •

### Specific elements of the vision:

- To create a strong tourism industry and a highly productive economy in the three districts;
- Maintain high quality of tourist offers in terms of products and services offered to tourists of age over 55, the level of staff service and information security;
- Incorporate the elements of the uniqueness and proximity of the three districts in terms of cultural, historical and natural heritage with tourist offers for tourists over 55;
- Percept new technologies and their use to help promote the three districts as a common cross-border destination for tourists of age over 55;
- To support sustainable economic development at cross-border, regional and local level by improving tourism services for tourists of age over 55;
- To build and maintain a competitive and quality image of the three districts within the national tourism market in Bulgaria, Romania and abroad;

### 5.3. Strategic Objectives and Corresponding Activities

The strategic objectives that are set for implementation in this strategy are the following:

- 1) Improve the capacity of the sector not only in terms of its growth but also in terms of overcoming the various problems in the tourism industry in the three districts;
- 2) To provide and improve the utilization of tourist services for Bulgarian, Romanian and foreign tourists of age over 55;
- 3) To cooperate with local authorities, businesses and non-governmental organizations from the three districts to improve together tourism planning and development of potential resources and widen the range of cross-border tourist offers;
- 4) To exploit in an appropriate and fair manner the available funding opportunities for activities relevant to the development of a tourist product for tourists of age over 55;





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
• ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК •

- 5) To create and provide permanent support for maintaining a positive tourist image in the three districts as a desirable tourist destination for Bulgarian, Romanian and foreign tourists of age over 55 years;
- 6) To promote the sustainable development of the historical, cultural and natural heritage, as well as the physical and natural resources that ensure the tourism development of the three districts;
- 7) Support the formation of sustainable tourism growth in the three districts and the creation of fair revenues for businesses and economic benefits for citizens;
- 8) To increase the standards of tourist services and the quality of products / services offered to tourists of age over 55;

In order to realize the eight strategic directions of development, it is necessary to classify the various activities into four main groups:

- Strategic activities for the development of tourist services / products for tourists of age over 55 (will be briefly referred to as „П”);
- Strategic activities for the development of the marketing and promotion of the cross-border destination for tourists of age over 55 (will be briefly marked with the letter „М”);
- Strategic activities for quality development (will be briefly marked with the letter „К”);
- Strategic Institutional Development Activities (will be briefly referred to as „И”);

The four categories of strategic activities described depict the specific tourism development priorities for tourists of age over 55 in the three districts of Vidin, Montana and Dolj, which are described in detail in the following points.

### 5.3.1. Priority for „tourist product development”

The main priorities for the tourism product for tourists over 55 in the three districts can be identified by the letter "П" and classified as follows:





- П1 Development of a common cross-border tourism strategy to attract tourists of age over 55;
- П2 Development of a common database for the regional tourist attractions of the three districts;
- П3 Coordination of a categorization system;
- П4 Preparation of guides for specific tourist services for tourists of age over 55;
- П5 Preparation of tourist packages for tourists of age over 55 during the off-season;
- П6 Monitoring the sustainable development of a tourism product for tourists of age over 55;
- П7 Promotion of tourist sites and use of computer and internet technologies for their promotion;
- П8 Placing of tourist signboards;

### 5.3.2. Priorities for the development of "marketing and promotional activities"

The main priorities under this heading concerning marketing activities can be marked with an "M" and summarized as follows:

- M1 Conducting marketing research and tourist "intelligence";
- M2 Preparation of programs for surveying tourists of age over 55;
- M3 Building a common specialized brand for the three districts as a tourist destination for tourists of age over 55;
- M4 Preparation of a program for marketing and promotion of tourist products for tourists of age over 55;
- M5 Participation in pre-selected trade fairs in various countries related to the tourism industry;
- M6 Participation in pre-selected fairs in Bulgaria and Romania;



- M7 Development of PPP regarding the promotion and marketing of the tourism product for tourists of age over 55;
- M8 Organizing a specialized fund for advertising and promotion based on PPP principles;
- M9 Building a network of tourist information centers.

### 5.3.3. Priorities for the development of the “quality”

The main priorities for "quality" can be identified by the letter "K" and classified as follows:

- K1 Monitoring and quality control of tourist services offered to tourists of age over 55;
- K2 Establishment of a system for monitoring the quality of the tourism industry in the three regions;
- K3 Support for quality promotion initiatives in the newly created tourist product for tourists of age over 55;
- K4 Creating a system for sustainable use of natural and cultural resources.

### 5.3.4. Priorities for the development of 'institutions’

The main priorities for the development of the "institutions" can be identified by the letter "И" and classified as follows:

- И1 Building positive relationships with the main institutions relevant to tourism development in the three districts;
- И2 Developing a communication policy of municipal authorities with business and non-governmental organizations in the three districts;
- И4 Exchange of information with the main institutions relevant to tourism product development for tourists of age over 55 in the three districts;
- И5 Support and co-operation with regional tourism associations;
- И6 Registration, monitoring and support of projects supporting tourism development;



ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



- И7 Participation in the development of educational tourism programs in cooperation with companies in the tourism industry;
- И8 Improving the capacity of tourism experts from the regional administration;

#### IV. ANALYSIS OF THE POLICY OF TOURIST SERVICE PROVIDERS TOWARDS TOURISTS OVER 55 - PROBLEMS, OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To date, in the three districts, most hotel and restaurant keepers, travel agencies and other stakeholders in the tourism industry do not attach the necessary importance to the tourist segment, consisting of tourists over 55 years of age. They are not taking any action to attract this group of tourists. Most managers of hotels, restaurants and travel agencies do not consider all the advantages, disadvantages and opportunities that would be offered to them if they prepare offers for tourists over 55 years, the reason is that they find the development of a special offer for tourists over 55 for expensive and unnecessary service. Tourism companies make their decisions based on extreme rationality and profit margins and rely on quick and safe profits as possible. The tourism industry is not yet aware of the **requirements and preferences of the elderly**. A problem among hoteliers and restaurateurs is the lack of staff who speak foreign languages, as well as the lack of sufficient staff to cater for tourists from the "third age". Another problem is the lack of ramps and other aids in hotels and restaurants for tourists of age over 55 with walking sticks, wheelchairs. As a problem with travel agencies, we can point out the fact that they do not currently offer travel packages for tourists of age over 55 that are tailored to their needs and physical capabilities.

In this regard, we might recommend that programs and services shall be prepared to be appropriate to the needs and demands of the "third age" tourists. It is essential for tour operators to offer a balanced offer that includes a combination of tranquility, rest, beautiful scenery, the opportunity to spend enough time with family and friends, providing a comfortable environment that implies the availability of special places (gyms, seats for





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



recreation, green areas, treatment rooms and more). It is important to organize visits to tourist attractions with easy access, which does not imply a tiring and busy route. It is advisable to differentiate the routes with different workloads, but to reach the same tourist attraction. For tourists of age over 55 it is important to combine the transition with rest. Elderly clients value the hospitality, cleanliness and kindness of the staff.

It is advisable to offer accommodation and travel agencies to the elderly, as well as to all their guests and clients, brochures with information about the region and sights, sightseeing maps, information about the working hours of museums and tourist centers, as well as other interesting landmarks and facts. The information materials should contain complete and reliable information on terrain characteristics, recreation areas, problem areas or slippery road surfaces.

Attractions can impress and persuade tourists of age over 55 to spend longer by providing guides, putting up signboards, including suggestions for pursuing local lifestyle activities.

It is advisable for “middle-aged” tourists to organize “slow tourism” excursions so that they can enjoy their journey, relax, refresh their minds and add value to their lives. The choice of attractions to be included in the itinerary should be made on the basis of the physical and health status of the tourists of age over 55. It is always advisable to include in the routes several possible options for visiting, to have facilities available for older tourists such as ramps, lifts or first aid points, including food and lodging services.

Businesses in the tourism sector need to invest in management, marketing and public relations training to reach different groups of tourists more easily. It is important for them **to be 'informed'**. For this purpose they must attend seminars, workshops, tourist fairs, trade fairs and tourist exchanges. It is also important to use the Internet to get the latest information. In order to be competitive, travel agents must systematically look at the information sources provided by the local information services, municipal statistics, tourist and training centers in the three municipalities.





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
•ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК•

**It is important to study what other entrepreneurs are doing.** For this purpose, other regions and countries should be visited in order to get acquainted with the way companies from the same branch work in other places and countries, how they run their business, how they attract clients of age over 55, what they are offered.

**Communicating and consulting potential clients of age over 55 is also important.**

Before offering a service to tourists of age over 55, it is advisable to seek the opinion of relatives, friends and neighbors of the same age group. They could say whether the new services are interesting and appropriate for them. It is important to offer potential customers of age over 55, samples of the products and services that are planned to be offered - food, recipes, cooking, wine, routes, etc.

**The market for the products / services offered should be investigated.** It is necessary to determine what they are looking for and what customers of age over 55 need. **Networking.** It is recommended that organizations working in the tourism sector be members of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Hotel and Restaurant Associations and / or other business and planning organizations or committees in the three districts. It is a good idea to explore whether there are other local entrepreneurs who would like to join various business initiatives.

**It is important** for each individual organization to first identify its mission in the tourism sector and determine whether it is prepared to welcome tourists of age over 55. When preparing an offer for tourists of age over 55, it should be borne in mind that when third-year tourists spend well, they will tell an average of 8 friends, whereas when the experience was not good, they will say it three times more people. **Therefore, it is a good idea not to attract tourists of age over 55 until organizations are ready to serve them properly.** Proper infrastructure is required for this purpose. Every tourist service provider should look at their object through the eyes of tourists over 55 and evaluate it from the perspective of the visitor. One of the most obvious needs of a site is proper designation. It is recommended to **place large and easy-to-read signs on the road leading to the tourist site. If it is a landmark, it is important to indicate the business hours at the site, hours**





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



**and days of the week.** If there is an entrance fee, this should be noted so that tourists are not unpleasantly surprised when they reach the entrance. It would be good to point out the presence of, for example, a souvenir shop, cafe and special performances nearby. **For the convenience of foreign tourists it is advisable to place signs in more than one language (in Bulgarian and English).**

It is essential that the tourist site has a safe and walkable entrance for people with walking sticks, crutches and wheelchairs. It is also important to have a large enough parking area with adequate flooring, well-marked and free of stumbling blocks. Next is the area itself and the facilities at its disposal (benches, toilets, ramps, waste bins, rest areas) that must be in good condition. It is important that they are appropriate, clean and accessible for people with walking sticks, crutches and disabled people.

It is advisable to place more signboards or information leaflets. In order to keep tourists for a longer period at the property, it is advisable that if you are a hotel keeper, to have a restaurant too, even if it is a self-catering or at least a cafe.

An important condition for the development of the three districts as a common destination is the establishment of stakeholder partnerships, which means that all work together on an equal footing. There are two major categories of partnerships to keep in mind: "common mission partnerships" or "common market partnerships". Partnerships with a common mission are accomplished by related cultural sites that are united by common professional standards and offer related services. For this purpose, it is important to obtain information on the success of other similar organizations in terms of visitor numbers and economic impact. The study is an important basis for developing a comprehensive plan. Meet people who work in other organizations promoting museum research, working with archives. Join tourism associations and national tourism organizations, attend their conferences and workshops, join their board of directors. Your efforts will be rewarded in the long term plan. And most importantly, you will be able to collaborate in many different ways with other cultural organizations in the three districts. For example, you could collect your advertising budgets to promote the region as a general





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



tourist destination for travelers of age over 55, together you could buy more and larger ads than any organization individually, thus achieving a synergistic effect. You can collaborate in the program area, such as raising funds to invite a traveling exhibit that would not otherwise be under the authority of any of the organizations individually; to develop a common lecture course to cover each cultural and historical heritage site in the three districts; ensure that all organizations are marking the same event in a given period of the year. You have to think “everybody wins”. For this purpose, **other tourism organizations should be considered as partners and not as competitors**. The status of a museum / site is inextricably linked to the status of all other museums / sites in the three districts.

It is important to realize that partnerships with other public or private sector organizations bring benefits to all actors and create the conditions for the extending the creativity of their members. When working with partnership with tourism and marketing-oriented professionals in the marketing and service industry, it is function much more successfully than when organizations are working independently. Such partnerships could be, for example, cultural and historical sites or local hotels and restaurants, travel agencies or local authorities, etc.

The economic basis of the tourism industry is related to: hotels, guest houses, resorts, restaurants, travel agencies and more.

A large part of the costs that tourists make is related to accommodation and food (attractions receive a very small share of total tourism revenue), which is why it is necessary to increase the attractiveness of the sites so that tourists can be retained for one or two days longer.

For this purpose, it is advisable for organizations and companies working in the tourism sector to contact companies that advertise and offer tourist opportunities, plan activities and day trips and events for their clients. In addition to the tourism sectors, economic development organizations, revitalization and beautification initiatives in central urban areas, banks that would provide funding for the implementation of your ideas and





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



think that their implementation will create new employment opportunities and additional income for the local population.

It is advisable to consider additional marketing opportunities that could be realized in partnership with other museums or organizations. A museum, together with a local hotel, for example, could advertise together - on a billboard, in a newspaper or in a magazine, on social networks, or elsewhere. In addition to paid ads, a local business can provide significant promotion to an entity by disseminating information about it to its customers.

**It is important to emphasize that every organization must take advantage of all the opportunities available to promote their site.**

The places of accommodation if they want to attract tourists of age over 55 must be clean, offer different price options in order to meet the needs of people of age over 55. In addition, it would be good to be close to the attractions, given the difficult mobility to some of the “people of mature age”.

Hotel keepers should pay attention to the fact that tourists over 55 years of age prefer small charming family hotels, especially those of historic or past importance, which offer affordable accommodation.

It is important for business practitioners to know that it is not enough for stores to be full of T-shirts, hats and fast food chains. It is important to have a variety of types of shops, including art galleries, souvenir shops, local crafts products, as well as stylish restaurants offering Bulgarian and diet cuisine to meet the needs of tourists of age over 55.

## VII. TOURIST ANIMATION

When talking about animation in the tourism sector for tourists of age over 55, we should be aware that they pay particular attention to authenticity, the inclusion of true history, and the uniqueness of presenting something different. An itinerary of tourists of





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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
• ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК •

age over 55 should include balanced recreation, visits to natural and cultural sites, and unique tourist services that tourists would not be able to use anywhere else.

The introduction of a new product for tourists of age over 55 means new customers and visitors, as well as renewed interest in the cross-border region of Vidin, Montana and Dolj by regular visitors. One of the most important moments for tourists of age over 55 is to realize that they are experiencing something unique. Most people who visit sites of cultural, historical and natural heritage are actually looking for unique and authentic experiences. Often they have done considerable research on the cultural, historical and natural heritage of a region and are experienced tourists. They want to get out more from their vacations than just fun and rest. They want to learn something new and broaden their understanding of the heritage of a region as they travel. Tourists need information about the history of the site, city or region. Too many sites are devoid of real historical basis. Most tourists of age over 55 do not want this. They expect to experience a unique educational experience. They want to connect with other people, understand details that they couldn't have learned during the preliminary research they did, they want to understand the history of the site, which has to be presented with a beginning, middle part and an end, they want to be immersed in the local way of life by touching an old characteristic local custom, for example.

If a site wants to attract tourists of age over 55, it must first be decided which part of the story or mythology it wants to tell. Each site has many different stories, some related to earth, others to people, others to buildings, and others to an event. Therefore, it is important to identify what is the most important part of the story and whether it will be of interest to tourists of age over 55. It is a good idea to create a story about the overall history of the site that is presented differently to different audiences. It is important to present only the correct information and facts. It is recommended that the history of the site is intertwined with the general history of the three districts. For thi purpose, we recommend working together with other sites in the





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
• ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК •

other two districts to build a cross-border tourism product. Thus, each place or object will have a specific role in the summarized story, rather than trying to tell himself.

Today's tourists of age over 55 expect more from museums than simply presenting exhibits. Museums must become places of active, interesting and intellectual interaction. These interactions can be related to storytelling or re-creation, hands-on activities, audio-visual programs, and more. It is advisable to use different methods to attract tourists of age over 55 as: programs related to storytelling, historical plays and performances, films and discussions, film festivals, lecture courses, hiking tours, computer information stations, video stations presenting documentaries, video introductions and other, headphones or audio demos for storytelling history, audio cassettes for walking tours and more, regular performances such as national dances and songs, traditional cuisine; trips to historic sites with trained guides; information through newspapers and brochures; special group tours for adult tourists of age over 55; detailed guides with information on museums; demonstrations: cooking, rug-making, pot-making, wood-carving, basket-making and the like; better signs and information signs.

## VIII. MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

One of the biggest challenges facing organizations and companies working in the tourism industry is reaching out to their clientele. The first thing that will need to be achieved is not to look at business as a "fight against competition". Other companies should not be seen as competitors, but as partners in advertising. This way everyone will be able to work to promote the three districts as a tourist destination with a large number of diverse attractions for tourists of age over 55.

Marketing means any organization or business to find out what people think about it or what they would like to experience when visiting it. Once identified what customers are looking for, a variety of promotional tools can be used, such as brochures, newspapers and magazines, online e-commercials, and more, to tell people in creative





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
•ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК•

and engaging ways that they offer what they are looking for. It is important that what is offered is consistent with what is presented in the ads. When potential customers respond to a brochure or email ad, they will need to be given exactly what caught their attention.

## XI. PROMOTION PLAN

In order for the promotion plan to succeed, it is important to first identify what the organization's goals are and what it hopes to achieve. Then you need to identify the product it intends to offer - an analysis of what you would like to sell (your story); a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) for the product in terms of advertising needs to be done.

- Target market – major target markets must be identified.
- Strategies and objectives – the tactics, techniques and tools that will be used (brochures, Internet, television, etc.) must be specified in order to reach the target markets.
- Budget – last but not least, it has to be calculated what all this will cost and where the funds will come from.

### ■ Defining the target market

It is important to analyze what kind of people visit the community and region to optimize the use of the limited advertising budget.

Initially, two basic questions must be asked:

1. Who is currently visiting your institution or company? Do you know if?:

- the visitors are local, national or foreign tourists ?;
- are visitors on a long holiday in your region or just going through transit ?;
- visit other attractions in the region?
- are individual tourists or travel in large groups ?;
- how do they find information about your site ?;





ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



- information on their shopping habits in the town?;

This information will help to build an adequate advertising campaign. Last but not least, it is important to identify who is currently visiting the local community. This information may differ from the attendance information of the particular site. If the region has a large number of tourists, but the attendance is extremely low, it is advisable to develop interesting ways to attract people visiting the town.

Answering the above questions will give information whether the particular site benefits tourists already visiting the local community or whether the site itself is a factor attracting to the destination.

The advertising tools that must be developed need to be aimed at attracting tourists over 55 years of age. It is advisable to prepare visitor guides, brochures or leaflets to offer to tourists at the various sites. Every object must know that in order to attract the attention of tourists it must be attractive. To do this, different promotion techniques must be used:

### 1. Brochure

Brochures or other printed materials that can be sent to people who contact the site after seeing the ads and requesting more information are a significant part of the advertisement. The brochure is recommended to be simple and informative. Photographs are of good quality, include information such as: unique features of the site; location and directions on how to reach visitors contact information (phone, email, website address). Developing a joint brochure with other organizations or attractions from the other two districts would be a plus.

### 2. Advertising

There are various tools you could use to advertise an item. These include print ads (magazines, newspapers), broadcast ads (radio, television), outdoor advertising (billboards), or electronic advertising (Internet). When preparing an ad, if you have a



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budget, it is advisable to consult a specialist to create the ads, billboards or website. Ads need to be simplified, cleaned up and shall encourage the viewer to learn more. There should not be a lot of text in the ads. The goal is for potential travelers over age of 55 to call you for more information, not to present everything in the form of advertising. It is important to maintain a certain image. Advertising should be placed where tourists of age over 55 are likely to see it, such as at bus stops, at airports and stations; in hotels and restaurants; in shopping malls.

### 3. Web site

It would be good for each site to have its own website to advertise it. The internet is relatively cheap, and the analysis showed that most of the tourists of age over 55 use the internet to plan their vacations. In order to be popular, a site must be linked to other relevant sites.

### 4. Public relations and media

“Public relations” is different from advertising: these are rarely paid and come closer to news than pure advertising. The goal, however, is often the same: to maintain the image, name and logo of the institution in the media to potential tourists. For this purpose, it is advisable to distribute press material in connection with news about the attraction. For example, a new exhibition or expo or perhaps hosting a big event. In order to attract potential customers, the advertisement should always include a name and contact phone on behalf of the media, as well as from interested potential clients or partners. The news could be sent to the foreign press, to writers developing travel guides, to travel agencies and operators, and to other relevant organizations.

### 5. Direct sales

This form of promotion is face-to-face or over the phone. Unlike advertisements that are made or published in newspapers, direct sale means just that - direct selling of



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ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



the product, going door to door to promote the services offered. For this purpose, contact with tour operators and travel agencies working with the target markets must be made. It is good to visit tourist exhibitions. In the event that the venue can host groups, different organizations may be invited to hold their meetings on site for free. At the end of the event a 5-10 minute presentation of the site and the services offered could take place.

## 6. Video - Movie or TV spots

Video visualization is a popular and attractive way to attract visitors. Making a video or TV spot presenting the site in all three districts will provoke customer interest. It should be borne in mind that 3-5 minutes of television time gives very good opportunities for informing and presenting the most important things from a single site or region. The film/movie as well as TV spots could be distributed through the site, social networks, and be presented during exhibitions, conferences and other events.

## 7. Smart marketing

Travel companies and restaurateurs presenting tourism products and services are important, but it should be borne in mind that creating a new product and marketing requires a solid investment from just one entrepreneur. In this sense, it is necessary to cooperate between entrepreneurs from the same industry, participate in networks, clusters with partners from one or different industry, use of joint external marketing services. The so called "Guerrilla marketing", which allows for remarkable results with little investment. The essence of the method is the study of the lifestyle and professional identity of the client and the connection with the design and production process. "Guerrillas" most often focus on small target groups and pre-select their target groups. Marketing involves a range of methods, usually free of charge. Several marketing methods come together to create a connection with the consumer, and this is usually done by one person. For example, the production of T-shirts made with



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



manual screen printing. The products are well known and appreciated by a number of Bulgarian and European partners. We use technology for printing company logo, T-shirts for advertising campaigns festivals, souvenir t-shirts, t-shirts with printed photo effect, according to the taste, desire and needs of customers.

## 8. Evaluation.

Last but not least, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing efforts.

## X. GOOD EUROPEAN PRACTICES

This part of the Strategy presents good European practices for the development of tourism products for tourists over 55 years of age.

The examples presented show that each country uses its own unique approach, which is largely predetermined by different natural, economic, social, historical, political and other conditions. Examples of good practices can be found everywhere, which are successful, in particular, because of the effective partnerships, strong involvement of local communities in decision-making and awareness-raising among stakeholders.

### 1. Good practice from the WelDest Project (Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany and the UK)

The Weldest project helps private companies, destination management organizations (DMOs) and government agencies turn a place into a destination for health and wellness procedures. The project has developed an online guide that provides a tool for self-assessment and development. It is designed for destinations that want to evaluate their potential as health destinations and identify their strengths, weaknesses, or development gaps. Academic institutions or organizations in the industry can also benefit from a course that can be used to train destinations for the development of health and wellbeing destinations. The self-assessment tool and the





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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
• ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК •

course can be accessed via the link on page 2 of the online manual: <http://julkaisut.turkuamk.fi/isbn9789522165404.pdf>, which can be found at the following website: <http://weldest.blogspot.com/>

## 2. “Underground Safety” Project - Maintaining safe underground tourist destinations

Thanks to the “Underground Safety” Project, one of the leading Polish consortia (consisting of technology SMEs, a tourist salt mine company and a polytechnic university) is developing a wireless intelligent system providing continuous detection and early warning of potential hazards to tourists, drivers and professionals, working underground. Thanks to a special bracelet or necklace, users have access to a central monitoring system through popular mobile devices. Alerts are issued when people enter restricted areas or unstable areas, when a visitor stays stationary for a long time, or when someone falls out of the group. The system also provides environmental control of the underground facility in terms of physical parameters (e.g. humidity, temperature) and gas monitoring (e.g. carbon dioxide, oxygen, carbon monoxide). Thanks to this, it can immediately calculate the maximum number of visitors that an area can absorb without destroying the flora and fauna or ancient drawings. It also includes structural sensors for detecting falling rocks and landslide movement. More information about the project can be found at the following website:

<https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/news/keeping-underground-tourist-destinations-safe>

## 3. “Places with Spirit” - Partnership of Thematic Villages (Warmia-Mazury Region, Poland)



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



In 2010, at the initiative of the Elblag Association, which works in support of non-governmental initiatives, a joint tourist offer is developed, based on historical, cultural and natural landmarks in the region. Currently, the partnership includes ten themed villages located in three municipalities, with the main objective being the sustainable development of the villages. These activities have actively involved local people, including the elderly, based on their experience and social potential. The theme of one of the villages - Yedrishovo is "The Village of Grandma". Not only traditional cuisine, household and herbal products are offered, but tourists are also engaged in activities inspired by tradition, such as craft workshops and toy making or local games. The villages have a common marketing strategy and advertising.

#### 4. Multicultural route Komotini - Maronia, Greece.

The multi-cultural appearance of Komotini, the harmonious coexistence of people of different faiths, cultures and ways of life, is undoubtedly a good practice that attracts people's interest. To make the city and its cultural landmarks more accessible, the municipality has made a route through all the major landmarks, museums, churches and mosques. Visitors can move around all the interesting places, stop to visit museums and exhibitions, and continue their journey outside the city in the Moroni area, where there are important remains of ancient civilizations. The aim is to promote monuments and traditions of the past, along with basic elements of modern multicultural life.

#### 5. Good practice by the Alternative Tourism Association - Arbanassi

The Alternative Tourism Association of Arbanassi brings together small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as individuals interested in improving the quality of tourism and the services offered in the village, and from there increasing the income from



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



tourism. Among the priorities of the Association's activities are the organization of the International Folklore Festival, such as an attraction for foreign tourists, the organization of equestrian opportunities, creating of eco-routes, etc.

## 6. The Route of the Medieval Churches, Hungary.

The route of the Medieval churches as a religious-historical tourist attraction includes a tour of the medieval religious buildings, which are under special protection and represent the unique character and traditions of church architecture in the country. Visitors get acquainted with this unique cultural heritage in the Carpathian Mountains through a thematic route near the border between Hungary, Romania and Ukraine. Since all three districts consider their cultural, architectural and religious heritage as extremely public wealth, they implement a commonly agreed safe-keeping, conservation and advertising program. The result is the creation of a competitive tourist attraction, the addition of interactive devices for presenting information in several languages, the promotion of walking and cycling tourism along the whole route, information boards and signs. The route is presented on a common website that contains information about 62 churches and various tourist packages, tailored to visitors - for mountaineers, cyclists, students, the elderly people. A mobile application for tourist guidance in the area has also been developed. The result is an increased number of tourists from different target groups.

## 7. “Karelia a la carte” network - culinary tours in Karelia, Finland

“Karelia á la carte” is a nationally and internationally recognized unique tourism network of restaurants, travel, food and event organization companies. The network was established in the 1990s. The companies, partners use only local products and services and organize culinary tours including cultural activities, gastronomy and



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



presentation of traditions. During these excursions, travelers taste local delicacies, learn about local crafts and folklore, visit attractions, even cook themselves - such as baking typical Karelia sweets. Tours can be tailored to each client's individual preferences and can be themed. The project is based on cooperation between food producers, craft workshops and travel companies. This also stimulates the development of small businesses and creates a common brand for marketing and advertising in the region. Among other results, Karelia culinary tours are being commercialized and seven different food products on the theme "Food" have been created. They are published in a recipe book and booklet, "Lunch at a Karelia Table", which tells the history of the region and presents local recipes. In Karelia á la carte souvenirs were also made. The network includes about 70 partners who sell their services collectively.

## 8. A gastronomic journey in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hungary.

The aim of the project is to present the local culinary traditions by identifying five municipalities with their own gastronomic culture and peculiarities. The program starts with the name "Old dishes in new clothes" and the goal of the good practice is not only for tourists, but also for the locals to explore and develop their culinary traditions, after which culinary festivals will be organized in the region. The product has common marketing and common advertising across the five regions. A special film was made for culinary tours and festivals, brochures were issued, local food producers and restaurants were also included in the network, a comprehensive campaign "Old dishes prepared in a new way" was implemented, thus stimulating the development of the local economy.

## 9. „5 days, 4 seasons, 3 municipalities” - Nessebar, Byala and Dolen Chiflik.



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
• ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК •

The three maritime municipalities are united in a joint innovative project to support, promote and develop a regional tourism product. The aim of the project is to overcome the seasonality of tourism, which is mainly in the summer and to diversify the territory for tourists to the inland, not just along the coast. The new tourist product “5 days, 4 seasons, 3 municipalities” is already part of the tour operator packages, with the three different municipalities - Nessebar, Byala and Dolen Chiflik joining forces and presenting places and events in common tourist packages that can diversify and make sense of the leisure of tourists. The opportunities they offer are for sea, cultural, eco and hunting tourism and are combined into a total of 25 tourist packages for the four seasons. Thematic products and services offered within daily packages in the three municipalities have been developed. Attractive destinations, local traditions and opportunities for different experiences are promoted. Hiking trails to scenic nature reserves, cultural and historical sites, traditional local holidays, hunting and fishing, photo trips, yachting, scuba diving, surfing, boating are also included. Tourists can visit local folklore festivals and fests, practice crafts and sample traditional cuisine. The project will prepare and distribute advertising, information and visual materials for the tourist region and the developed innovative product - advertising guide of the region, brand of the product, interactive organizer, advertising video clip and video movie, which will be broadcast in national and foreign media.

## 10. Tropical Tourism Program, Spain.

The Tropical Tourism Program was created by the Granada Regional Council to promote the leisure and autonomy of adults and is aimed at people of age over 65, as well as hard-to-move people. A specific hotel is chosen: close to the beach, cozy and adapted for hard-to-move visitors. The activity includes evening shows and other entertainment. The program is implemented by the local municipal administration.



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



The municipal authorities provide the initial funding, which covers a large part of the total costs. Subsequently, contracts were concluded with private funds and health care intermediaries. In addition to providing adult entertainment, the program also contributes to the socio-economic development of the area. New jobs are created, local transport companies and food producers are stimulated, the effect on the economy is around EUR 1 million.

## 11. Virtual museum, New Zealand

Through interactive digital techniques, the Canterbury Digital Museum transforms the museum's static exhibit into an interactive, dynamic and engaging adventure. This increases the amount of time spent by tourists at the museum and leads to repeat visits. The stories are told by a virtual guide who takes tourists through the museum and through sound, music, paintings and 85 images introduces them to extinct animals, archeological frescoes and cultural artifacts. It is a memorable and unique experience for tourists. It is Suitable for disabled people and elderly tourists.

## XI. INDICATIVE ROUTES AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FOR TOURISM FOR PEOPLE OF AGE OVER 55 IN VIDIN, MONTANA AND DOLJ DISTRICTS

The process of cooperation and integration between different spheres of social life, which began in the field of science, is increasingly present in the "real" life. The travel industry is rapidly moving towards exploring consumer psychology and meeting higher-level needs. Tourism is gradually shifting the focus from traveling to a particular destination to traveling to the individual one. Industry trends are changing, with the introduction of new technologies in service and furnishing giving way to the pursuit of those peaks in Maslow's pyramid of socialization and cultivation needs.





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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



In the context of the new requirements, non-traditional routes, tourist packages and services for the development of the tourism sector, which focus on the individual's experience, social activity and spiritual enrichment, become relevant.

As a result of the developed analysis and study of the tourism sector of the Vidin, Montana and Dolj districts, the following major tourism products have been identified as the object and potential for development of indicative routes and services for tourists of age over 55 years:

1. Cultural Tourism & Tourism of historical and archaeological sites;
2. Event tourism
3. Eco tourism (tourism - oriented towards the environmentally friendly way of combining tourist preferences with the natural conditions of the environment);
4. Health tourism
5. Gourmet and wine tourism.
6. Crouise tourism on the Danube river

## 11.1 Proposals for 55+ tourist itinerary for tourists in Vidin, Montana and Dolj districts

### Itinerary № 1 A walk through the past of Vidin, Montana and Dolj districts

Montana - Berkovitsa - Varshets - Chiprovtsi - Belogradchik - Vidin - Kula - Rakovitsa - Calafat - Maglavit - Cetate - Podari - Craiova - Montana

Length of tourist route from start to destination: 720 km.

Season: All year-round

Duration: Seven day route/itinerary

### Day 1

#### Arrival in town Montana



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
•ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК•

**Visit to the Montana History Museum**

**Visit to Lapidarium, Montana**

**Lunch**

**Visit to Castra ad Montanesium Fortress**

**Visit to Montanesium City Park**

**Dinner and overnight stay**

**Day 2**

**Arrival in town Berkovitsa**

**Visit to the Berkovitsa Museum Complex**

**Departure for town Varshets**

**Arrival in town Varshets**

**Lunch**

**A visit to the town's mineral water bath in Varshets**

**Departure for the Lopushansky Monastery “St. John the Forerunner”**

**Visit to the Lopushansky Monastery of St. John Forerunner”**

**Departure for town Chiprovtsi**

**Arrival in town Chiprovtsi**

**Dinner and overnight stay**

**Day 3**

**Breakfast**

**Visit to the Chiprovtsi History Museum**

**Departure for Chiprovsky Monastery St. Ivan Rilski**

**Visit to the Chiprovski Monastery of St. Ivan Rilski“**

**Departure for town Belogradchik**

**Lunch**

**Visit to the Belogradchik Rocks and Belogradchik Fortress**



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
•ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК•

## Visiting the Museum of Nature and science

Visit to “Hadzhi Hussein” Mosque

Dinner and overnight stay

### Day 4

Breakfast

Arrival in town Vidin

Visit to Baba Vida Fortress, town of Vidin

Visit to Lapidarium, town of Vidin

Visit to the Synagogue, town of Vidin

Visit to the Mosque and Library of Osman Pazvatoglu

Lunch

Visit of the Historical museum «Konaka»

Visit of Orthodox cathedral „Saint Dimitar“

Dinner and overnight stay

### Day 5

Breakfast

Departure to town Kula

Visit to Castra Martis Fortress, Kula

Visit to Ethnographic House in Kula

Lunch

Departure to village of Rakovitsa

Visit of Rakovitsa Monastery

Departure to Town Calafat

Dinner and overnight stay

### Day 6



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
•ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК•

## Breakfast

Visit to the Marinku Palace

Departure for Maglavit Monastery

Visit to Maglavit Monastery

Departure for Cultural Port ReadLunch

Departure for Jitian Monastery

Visit to the Jitian Monastery

Departure for town Craiova

Visit to the Oltenia Museum

Dinner and overnight stay

## Day 7

Breakfast

Visit to the Medieval House Baniei

Visit to the Museum of Art, Craiova

Lunch

Visit to Mihai Viteazul Square with the unique Singing Fountains, the ancient building of the municipality;

Visit to the Episcopal Cathedral of Madonna Dudu,

Visit to “St. Dimitar» Cathedral

Dinner and overnight stay

## Day 8

Breakfast

Departure

## **Itinerary № 2 The natural treasures of Vidin, Montana and Dolj districts**



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



ФОНДАЦИЯ  
•ФЕНИКС - 21 ВЕК•

**Varshets - Ogosta dam - Belogradchik - Rabisha - Oreshets - Stakevtsi - Vidin-  
Grama - Gradets - Calafat - Cuperceni noi- Craiova - Segarcea - Plenita - Cetate -  
Bistret - Varshets**

**Length of tourist route from start to destination: 820 km**

**Season: summer, autumn, spring**

**Duration: Seven day route/itinerary**

## Day 1

Arrival in town varshers

Visit to the eco trail «Ivanchova Polyana»

Visit to the Paradise Corner Waterfall

Lunch

A visit to the town's mineral water bath in Varshets

A walk in a walking area known as Boulevard with the plane trees

Walk in the Sunny Garden

Dinner and overnight stay

## Day 2

Breakfast

Arrival at Ogosta dam

Visit of Ogosta dam

Departure for town Belogradchik

Lunch

Visit to the Belogradchik Rocks

Visit to the Natural History Museum

Walk through the city park

Dinner and overnight stay



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



## Day 3

### Breakfast

Departure to «Magura» cave

Visit to «Magura» cave

### Lunch

Departure to «Venetsa» cave

Visit to «Venetsa» cave

Visit to the "Saint George Ruian" hurch

Departure to Stakevtsi village

Visit of the «Bialata voda» waterfall

Departure to Vidin

Dinner and overnight stay

## Day 4

### Breakfast

Departure for the Chaturite area in Gramada

The worship of the Chaturite area in Gramada

Departure to Albutinski Monastery

Visit of Albutinski Monastery

Departure for Calafat

Lunch in town Calafat

### Lunch

Visit of Chumel fortress – preserved forest reserve with ancient acacia forest

Visit to the village of Ciupercien Noi on the ornithological reserve

Departure to town Craiova

Dinner and overnight stay

## Day 5

### Breakfast



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



**Visit to Nicolae Romanescu Park in Craiova**

**Lunch**

**Visit of Botanical garden in Craiova**

**Visit to Museum of Nature and Science - Craiova, section of Oltenia Regional Museum**

**Visit to Mihai Viteazul Square with singing fountains, the ancient building of the municipality;**

**Dinner and overnight stay**

**Day 6**

**Breakfast**

**Visit to Youth Park, Craiova**

**Departure to Segarcea**

**Lunch**

**Visit to the Royal Wine Cellar Segarcha**

**Departure to Plenita**

**Visit to Poiana Buzhurului Reserve**

**Departure to Craiova**

**Dinner and overnight stay**

**Day 7**

**Breakfast**

**Departure for Cultural Port Cetate**

**Visit to the Cultural Port Cetate**

**Lunch**

**Departure to Bisteri municipality**

**Visit to recreational and fishing area Calugareni Lake**

**Dinner and overnight stay**



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ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ФОНД ЗА РЕГИОНАЛНО РАЗВИТИЕ  
ИНВЕСТИРАМЕ ВЪВ ВАШЕТО БЪДЕЩЕ!



БЪЛГАРСКО ПРАВИТЕЛСТВО



## Day 8

Breakfast

Departure

### Itinerary № 3 Friendly trip to Vidin, Montana and Dolj districts

Craiova - Bucuvat - Perisor - Galicea mare - Bailesti - Filiasi- Calafat - Cetate-  
Corabia - Vidin - Belogradchik - Borovitsa - Chiprovtsi - Montana - Barzia -  
Berkovitsa - Varshets - Craiova

Length of tourist route from start to destination: 810 km.

Season: All year-round

Duration: Seven day route/itinerary

## Day 1

Arrival in town Calafat

Visit to the Oltenia Museum

Visit to the Craiova Art Museum

Lunch

Visit to Nicolae Romanescu Park in Craiova

Walk through the center of town of Craiova

Dinner and overnight stay

## Day 2

Breakfast

Visit to the Botanical Garden in Craiova

Visit to the Medieval House Baniei

Lunch

Visit to «St. Nicholas » church in Craiova



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**Visit to the Church of the Assumption ” Mantuleasa, Craiova**

**Visit to Koshuna Bukovat Monastery**

**Dinner and overnight stay**

**Day 3**

**Breakfast**

**Departure to Perisor**

**Visit to the House of Anri Coanda Memorial from Perisor**

**Visit to Galicea Mare Cellar**

**Departure to Bailesti**

**Lunch**

**Visit to the memorial house of the actor Amza Pelea from Bucharest**

**Walking through the park of Bailesti**

**Departure to Filiasi**

**Visit to the Filisanu Family Mausoleum**

**Visit to the Roman Camp by Racarii de Jos**

**Dinner and overnight stay in Calafat**

**Day 4**

**Breakfast**

**Visit to St. Nicholas Church, Calafat**

**Departure for Cetate**

**Visit to the Castle of Barbie Another**

**Lunch at the restaurant at the Cultural Port Read**

**A visit to the Desa - Castavita Archaeological Site**

**Departure for Vidin**

**Visit to Baba Vida Fortress, Vidin**

**Visit of «St.Petka» church**



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**Visit to the Cross Barracks Museum**

**Visit to the Nikola Petrov Art Gallery, Vidin**

**Dinner and overnight stay**

**Day 5**

**Breakfast**

**Departure for Belogradchik**

**Visit to the Belogradchik rock formations**

**Visit to the Museum of History «The Panova House»**

**Lunch**

**Visit to a cellar in Borovitsa and wine tasting**

**Visit to the Valcho Valchev Art Gallery in Belogradchik**

**Dinner and overnight stay**

**Day 6**

**Breakfast**

**Departure to Chiprovtsi**

**Visit to the Museum of History**

**Visit to Catherine's house**

**Lunch**

**Departure to Montana**

**Visit to lapidarium in Montana**

**Visit to Mihaylova House in Montana**

**Visit to the Old Bath in Montana**

**Visit to the Sunny garden in Montana**

**Dinner and overnight stay**



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## Day 7

Breakfast

Departure for the Klisurski Monastery

Visit to the Klisurski Monastery

Departure for Berkovitsa

Visit to Bergland Horse Base in Berkovitsa

Departure for Varshets

Lunch

Visit to the Varshets Museum of History;

Visit to St. George the Victorious Church "

Walking along the Boulevard with the plane trees

Dinner and overnight stay

## Day 8

Breakfast

Departure

## XII. MODEL FOR MONITORING THE TOURIST PRODUCT FOR TOURISTS OF AGE OVER 55

The variety of activities included in the Strategy requires that each of them is subject to specific monitoring. For this purpose it is necessary to specify the performance of each activity in respective tasks. They should allow assessment and control of the progress of the implementation of the Strategy in accordance with the specificity of the individual parameters.

The implementation of the Strategy as a whole raises the need for joint monitoring. Its main objective is to ensure synchronization and mutual support in the implementation of the identified activities and priorities.





Indicator	Means of achievement
a number of Bulgarian, Romanian and foreign tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- active advertising campaign</li> <li>- integrated cross-border tourism product for tourists of age over 55</li> <li>- active product policy</li> <li>- wide promotion of cultural, historical and natural heritage</li> </ul>
Number of accommodation facilities and shelter places - category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- offering different types of tourism</li> <li>- increase in tourist flow</li> <li>- enlargement and modernization of accommodation facilities in the three districts</li> </ul>
A number of nights spent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- wide promotion of the tourist offer for tourists of age over 55 through all possible channels</li> </ul>
Revenues from Bulgarian and Romanian tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating conditions for additional services</li> <li>- Development of animation for tourists of age over 55</li> </ul>
Revenues from foreign tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- complex tourist product for tourists of age over 55</li> <li>- quality, standards</li> <li>- synergy between municipality - regional administration - business - non-governmental sector</li> </ul>
Partnerships between organizations from the three districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- active cooperation</li> <li>- quality, standards</li> </ul>
Number of projects implemented under European programs for cross-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Synergy - Municipality - Governor's administration - business - NGO sector</li> </ul>



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transnational cooperation, cross-border cooperation, European Structural Funds with emphasis on tourism	
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## CONCLUSION

The Tourism Development Strategy for tourist of age over 55 is a common, targeted and coordinated cross-border tourism policy. Currently, the cross-border region does not have a unified image to identify itself as a destination of tourist over 55. The main tourism products are mainly focused on several sites of high significance, but there is no integrated product based on common tourism resources. Tourism development is still divided by the border between the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania, lacking a common image of the cross-border region as a single destination for tourists of age over 55.

The cross-border region is not sufficiently advertised on the main target markets, Bulgarian and Romanian, as well as on the European market.

The current Tourism Development Strategy for tourists of age over 55 gives guidance to businesses, the non-governmental sector and local authorities in the Vidin, Montana and Dolj districts on how to be more competitive in the tourism market and how to offer adequate services to tourists of age over 55. The coordinating role of the implementation of the Strategy is determined by the NGO sector in the three districts.

Identifying the cross-border region as a destination for tourists of age over 55 and its presence in tourism distribution networks requires a strategic and commercially oriented approach to marketing. The strategy contains measures and recommendations that aim to make the cross-border region a desirable destination for tourists of age over 55, increase tourists' interest in the region, increase tourist attendance and, accordingly, the revenue from the sale of the new product for tourists over 55.

This strategy aims to be dynamic, allowing it to be adapted in a way that can cope with situations that will arise in the future. The Vidin - Montana - Dolj cross-



border region should become recognizable for travel agents as a common destination, developing towards tourism for adults of age over 55. This imposes the requirement for positioning the newly created tourist product by defining the parameters for successful positioning of the offered products and services in the ideas of real and potential tourists.

The product strategy and policy for promoting the cross-border region of Vidin, Montana and Dolj as a destination for tourists of age over 55 aims at winning a worthy place on the international market and competitiveness of the product compared to that of the leading countries in the industry.

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