

ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION IN TOURISM IN THE CROSS-BORDER REGION OF TOPOLOVGRAD-PINARHISAR

Report

IInd Module of the Cross-border Forum

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of Topolovgrad-Pinarhisar”**

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Tourism is a priority in the Development Plan of the Municipality of Topolovgrad for the period 2014 - 2020 and in the Development Plan of the Municipality Pinarhisar for the economic benefits it can bring to the cross-border region of Topolovgrad-Pinarhisar and its inhabitants.

Tourism can create new jobs and rising incomes, motives and resources for development, environmental protection and strengthening of the cultural diversity.

There are assets in the cross-border region of Topolovgrad-Pinarhisar that can be used to create a significantly expanded tourist product to attract both Bulgarian and Turkish tourists, as well as tourists from other countries. The rich historical, cultural, architectural, natural and spiritual heritage is a sound basis with a great potential that is not yet developed.

1. Characteristics of the Topolovgrad Municipality

1.1. Location

The Topolovgrad Municipality is situated in the Southeast peripheral border part of the Republic of Bulgaria. In the administrative-territorial division, it is in the Haskovo District, in its Northeastern part. To the North and East, it borders with the Yambol region /the municipalities of Elhovo and Tundzha - Yambol/. To the West and Northwest, it borders the Stara Zagora region /the municipalities Radnevo and Galabovo/. To the Southeast, /the lands of the villages of Prisadets and Filipovo/ it borders with the Republic of Turkey. To the South, it borders the municipalities of Svilengrad and Harmanli, the Haskovo district.

The area of the municipality includes the Northern and Eastern slopes of the Sakar Mountains and its foothills, and the lower stream of the Tundja River. The municipality covers an area of 712.5 sq. Km, of which 33 % are forests.

1.2. Demographic Profile:

The urban structure of the municipality consists of 21 settlements – the administrative centre is the town of Topolovgrad and 20 villages: Balgarska polyana, Vladimirovo, Dobroselets, Kapitan Petko Voyvoda, Kamenna reka, Knyazhevo, Mramor, Oreshnik, Orlov dol, Planinovo, Prisadets, Radovets, Sakartsi, Svetlina, Sinapovo, Srem, Ustrem, Filipovo, Hlyabovo and Chukarovo. The villages are divided into eight mayoralties as follows: Hlyabovo, Orlov dol, Oreshnik, Mramor, Ustrem, Radovets, Srem and Sinapovo.

The main religion in the municipality is the Eastern Orthodoxy. Topolovgrad is the centre of the Archdiocese of the Sliven Diocese.

1.3. Transport Accessibility

The Municipality of Topolovgrad borders and is open to the neighbouring municipalities - Elhovo, Svilengrad, Lyubimets, Harmanli, Galabovo, Radnevo and Tundja-Yambol. As an “open municipality” its transport connections go through 4 entrance-exit points – from North through the “Tundzha” municipality – Yambol to the towns of Yambol, Sliven and Bourgas; from Northeast through the Elhovo municipality to Yambol, Bourgas and Lesovo; from Southeast to Svilengrad, Kapitan Andreevo and the Republic of Turkey; from Southwest through Harmanli Municipality to the district centre of Haskovo and the interior of the country, from Northwest through the municipality of Radnevo to Stara Zagora and the interior of the country.

The structure of roads provides good connections of the villages with the administrative centre of Topolovgrad.

The territory of the Municipality of Topolovgrad is served by road transport. The production connections and the trips between the settlements are carried out using the road transport. There are municipal, regional and Republican transport schemes providing connections of the municipality to the municipal centre – the town of Topolovgrad, the regional centre – the town of Haskovo and the bigger cities – Varna, Bourgas, Yambol and Stara Zagora.

The second-class roads No. II-79 and II-76 “Burgas - Elhovo - Topolovgrad – Harmanli” to Svilengrad /the border with the Republic of Turkey /Kapitan Andreevo - Kapikule/ and the Republic of Greece /Kapitan Petko voyvoda - Ormenio/ and Harmanli /Haskovo, Kardjali and Smolyan/ are most widely used of the transport system in the region. There is an intensive traffic on the second-class roads No. II-57 and II-55 “Stara Zagora - Radnevo – the village of Mudrets” - Topolovgrad – the village of Ustrem.

There is almost no traffic on the Republican road III-559 the village of “Polski Gradets, Radnevo - Topolovgrad - Ustrem village due to the poor condition of the road.

From Topolovgrad there are daily bus lines to Stara Zagora, Radnevo, Burgas, Haskovo, Yambol, Harmanli, Elhovo, etc. All settlements in the area are connected by bus lines with the municipal centre and some nearby towns.

The distance to the Yambol Railway Station is 55 km and to the Burgas Airport - 150 km. With the launching of regular flights in summer from Bourgas Airport to different cities in Western Europe, as well as the use of the airport by low-cost airlines, the number of the people, arriving in the region without a schedule, will increase, which will be a direct benefit for the municipality.

1.4. Servicing the population and visitors

The emergency services in Topolovgrad municipality are carried out by the Emergency Medical Aid Subsidiary, directly subordinated to the Emergency Medical Assistance Centre - Haskovo.

Local area calls are made via the network of the three mobile operators - M-tel, Telenor and Vivacom. In Topolovgrad and the larger settlements of the municipality there are branches of the Bulgarian Posts.

The following services for the population in the area and the country: Topolovgrad Municipality, Regional Police Station, Regional Court, Regional Prosecutor's Office, Vicarage, Chitalishte "St.St. Cyril and Methodius – 1894", Municipal History Museum, Sports hall and playgrounds, DSK Bank, etc.

Refueling can be done in Topolovgrad, where there are 3 petrol stations and 2 gas stations, and also at the petrol station in the village of Ustrem.

2. Tourist Resources

The tourist potential of Topolovgrad municipality is assessed as good, giving opportunities for the development of different types of tourism. The region is full of interesting cultural and historical, natural and ethnographic resources.

2.1. Cultural and historical landmarks

The cultural and historical landmarks with significant tourist potential are related to the ancient inhabitants of the area – the Thracians /dolmens, sanctuaries, etc./, and the Eastern Orthodox religious monuments /monasteries, churches, churches in the rocks, chapels/.

2.1.1. Thracian Dolmens

The Dolmens are tombstones, where the Thracian population of Sakar Mountain buried their dead fellow citizens without burning their bodies. These interesting megalithic monuments of human culture appear in our lands in the 13th century BC and have ceased their "life" in VII - VI century BC. So they are the oldest monumental tombs in Thrace.

Sakar Mountain is a Bulgarian megalithic park, and its centre is the Topolovgrad Municipality, where the greatest number of these fascinating and mysterious human creations are preserved.

At present, in the municipality of Topolovgrad, the largest number of and well-preserved large two-chamber dolmens are located in the land of the village of Hlyabovo (Byalata treva, Krалеva Saya, Nuchevi cheiri, Gaidarova peshtera, Stoeva krusha, Mangura, etc.), at Manov Bair, Slavovakoria, the caves in the area of the village of Bulgarska poliana, in the land of the village of Sakartsi (Kapaliyka, Yurgakev egrek, Cliftinova niva, Bakalov kladenets, Zhelyov gyol terrains). Dolmens and remains are located in the land of Topolovgrad (Kuza terrain, Shareniyat tron), in the territory of the village of Radovets (Kapaliyka and Ayvaluka terrains), in the land of the village of Planinovo (Solishta terrain, above the village), etc.

In the past, people called the dolmens "caves, kapakliyiki, kapakli, kapakli tash, pokriti kamune, zmeyuvi dupki, zmeyuvi kamuni (dragon holes, dragon stones)", but officially the name "dolmen" is used, which is of a Celtic origin and means "stone table".

2.1.2. Thracian sanctuaries

Holy places and religious sites from prehistoric times and antiquity in the area are found mostly in the higher parts of the mountain. These are the sanctuaries of Neolithic times and the Thracian

sanctuaries. They are located mostly on the mountain peaks. In the area, more interesting and famous are “Paleokastro” – the sanctuary of the Sun, the Neolithic sanctuary at the Damkaya peak and the rock Thracian sanctuary at Kamenna Mogila peak.

2.1.3. Ancient and Medieval Settlements and fortresses

The ancient and medieval settlements and fortresses in the Sakar Mountain and along the valley of the Tundja River are built on strategically important sites with good visibility and on places, suitable for living – along springs, rivers. Many of the fortresses guarded the two roads, which crossed the area: from Uskudama (Adrianople) along the Tundja River to Kabyle and Vereya (Augusta Trayana) through the mountain – you can see attractions such as the Paleokastro Fortress, the Thracian Ruler’s home in the Tatar masha terrain. The remains of the Bukelon /at the village of Matochina/ and Kastru Rubra /at the village of Izvorovo/ fortresses near the area can be used as tourist attractions.

2.1.4. Religious Temples

The Eastern Orthodox Christianity has deep roots in the region since the time of Byzantium and the baptized Bulgarian state. The Northern and Eastern slopes of the Sakar Mountain are preserved as a pure Christian area during all historical ups and downs in life and ordeals, experienced by the local population. Christianity has always been strong, often the only, people's support in overcoming the difficulties.

There are several early Christian rock churches from the 10th century /Vehtata Tsarkva (Old Church) above the “St. Trinity” monastery, as well as the rock churches along the Dekili kaya border near the village of Matochina and “St. Panteleimon” near the Mihalich village/.

The “St. Trinity” monastery is an Eastern Orthodox Sanctuary for the Sakar Mountain, as well as over 30 Orthodox temples in the municipality. The churches “St. Virgin Mary”, “St. Elijah”, “St. Georgi”, “St. Petka” in Topolovgrad, the village of Oreshnik – “St. Petka”, the village of Orlov dol – “St. Dimitar”, the village of Ustrem – “St. Dimitar”, the village of Srem – “Ascension of the Lord”, etc. In the recent years, a considerable number of temples have been repaired, chapels around Topolovgrad, Oreshnik village, Sakartsi village and the nearby Monastery Heights were built and restored.

2.2. Museums and Museum Collections

Municipal Historical Museum - Topolovgrad: The contemporary exhibition is located on two floors and stores valuable objects, documents, and pictures, which prove the historical development of the region. On the second floor, the history of the region from ancient times to the present day is displayed. An ethnographic collection is arranged on the first floor.

Museum collection – Radovets village: The collection is displayed in the Vassil Levsky Municipal Centre – Radovets village and shows the traditions, customs, life and history of the village.

Museum collection – Simapovo village: the collection is displayed in a building next to the school and shows the traditions and customs of the village of Sinapovo.

2.3. Traditional Cultural Activities and Events

The episodic and periodical activities that take place in the municipality of Topolovgrad, as well as the events from the rich cultural calendar in the municipality, can be promoted and attract the attention of Bulgarian and foreign tourists. “Velko Kanev”, the International Festival of amateur comedy theatres, pantomime and satire is famous in Bulgaria and abroad. The folklore fair “Holy Trinity” at the monastery “St. Trinity” at the patron saint’s day is very popular. The fair is backed with two centuries of history.

Some well-preserved local customs are also worth mentioning – “Koleduvane”, a Christmas ritual in all the settlements in the region, the “Jamalite” in the village of Oreshnik, “Lazaruvane” in the villages of Mramor, Ustrem, Knyazhevo, “Trifon Zarezan” - in all the settlements in the area, “Todorovden” horses’ racing in Topolovgrad and Orlov dol village, etc.

You can add to this diversity the rich clothing, songs, people and customs, the delicious local cuisine and the aromatic and enchanting local wines and brandies, all of which are complemented by casual local hospitality, are also a good base for tourism development.

EVENT	PLACE AND TIME	CONTACT PERSON	WHAT IS GOING ON
St. Basil’s day the Circumcision (of Christ)	Oreshnik village January, 1 st	Mayor +359 0470 / 5-40-70	<i>The first day of the New Year is celebrated with a colourful procession of the jamals – masked youths who walk from house to house to drive away evil forces and bless for health and prosperity. They are dressed in unprocessed sheepskins and goatskins. Sewing a jamal is slow and takes a long time. At the waist of each jamal there is a belt with hooked “tunchove” (bells, chanove).</i> <i>In addition to jamals (like kukeri), there are boys in the group dressed as maids and pepelashi, who wear leather bags full of ashes on their shoulders to spray people for health.</i> <i>The procession is combined with comic elements - while touring the village, the jamals are “teased” by people, and the bravest viewers even “provoke” them to fight. The “girls” in the group are being watched by the bachelors in the audience. When one of the “girls” goes astray, she can be stolen by a bachelor. Then the “pepelashi”, whose task is to guard the jamals, rush to capture the thief and return the girl.</i>
Trifon Zarezan the folkloric patron of winegrowers	The vineyards along Topolovgrad February, 1 st ; All villages in the municipality	Raina Milanova Tel. +359 0470 / 5-22-42	<i>The feast is organized by the “Dar ot Lozata” Club (The gifts of the vineyards), Topolovgrad Municipality, “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” Community Centre and the community centres in the villages. The blessing of water is done, then a ritual for vine-cutting is performed, and then a competition for the best wine is held.</i>
Todorovden	Town of	Atanaska	<i>Organized by the Municipality of Topolovgrad and the “Todorovtsi – Todor Uzunov” Initiative Committee. A</i>

Saint Theodore's Day	Topolovgrad	Mihaleva Tel. +359 0470 / 5-22-96	traditional horse racing with horses, horse and donkey carts is held. Many people from the town and the surrounding villages watch the racing and support the participants. The "Todorovtsi - Todor Uzunov" Initiative Committee, sponsors and the Topolovgrad Municipality provide prizes for the winners.
Todorovden Saint Theodore's Day	Orlov Dol Village "Alana" terrain	Mayor +359 04733 / 22-22	Horsing is held, attracting villagers. The town council provides prizes for the winners.
Velikden Easter	Town of Topolovgrad	Raina Milanova Tel. +359 0470 / 5-22-42	A traditional Easter concert and exhibitions are organized
International Festival of amateur comedy theatres, pantomime and satire "Velko Kanev"	Town of Topolovgrad, May	Krasimira Yatakchieva Tel. +359 0470 / 5-33-47	The festival was created as a national one in 1996. It takes place within 7 days, on the eve of the city's official feast - May 24th. It is organized by the Ministry of Culture, the Union of Bulgarian Actors, the Union of People's Chitalishta, the Municipality of Topolovgrad and the Chitalishte "St.St. Cyril and Methodius-1894". Theatrical groups from 7 countries participate in the festival.
May 24th – Day of Topolovgrad	Town of Topolovgrad	Krasimira Yatakshieva Tel. +359 0470 / 5-33-47	A one-week festive program is held - Days of Culture in Topolovgrad with the participation of local and visiting groups. Within the framework of the program a folk festival – "Sakar sings" and a celebration of the old town song "In the garden of my soul" are held. Each year, a children's essay, poem and drawing competition is organized, dedicated to the hometown. On May 24 th , a festive procession of pupils is held. Honorary diplomas are given to prominent figures of education and culture.
"St. Trinity" Convention	At the "St. Trinity" monastery JUNE	Krasimira Yatakchieva Tel. +359 0470 / 5-33-47	It is held annually for two days. Organizers are Topolovgrad Municipality, Sliven Mitropolia, Chitalishte "St.St. Cyril and Methodius – 1894". Includes a celebration of folk art with the participation of local and visiting folk groups from Southeast Thrace, free-style wrestling and Luna Park. On Sunday, the Holy Mass of the Metropolitan of Sliven is hosted in the Holy Trinity Monastery.
Motor Rock Festival Topolovgrad	"Koriyata" Terrain AUGUST	Krasimira Yatakchieva Tel. +359 0470 / 5-33-47	Contests with motorbikes, rockers' games and concerts of rock groups are held
Festival of the traditional local products and the Imperial	SEPTEMBER	Diana Georgieva Tel. +359 0470/	The Festival is organized by the Municipality of Topolovgrad and the Bulgarian Society for protection of birds. The Festival promotes places with preserved nature, rich biodiversity, ecologically clean agricultural production from the areas of

<i>Eagle – Topolovgrad</i>		5-49-39	<i>the European ecologic network «NATURE 2000» and applying environmentally friendly agricultural practices in the protected areas of the network.</i>
<i>Day of the Bulgarian National Leaders</i>	<i>Topolovgrad November 1st</i>	<i>Raina Milanova Tel. +359 0470 / 5-22-42</i>	<i>A concert of the Chitalishte Art groups.</i>
<i>Christmas and New Year holidays</i>	<i>Topolovgrad December 6 – 30</i>	<i>Krasimira Yatakchieva Tel. +359 0470 / 5-33-47</i>	<i>A Festive programme with the participation of Art groups from Topolovgrad and the visiting amateur and professional groups is organized. Every year a ceremony for the “Sports person of the year” is held.</i>
	<i>Ustrem village December 24th</i>	<i>Mayor +359 04732 / 22-13</i>	<i>The children in the village perform the custom Christmas Star. At 7-8 pm they go to the houses, carrying a luminous star with the icon of St. Virgin Mary. They sing songs for Christmas and bless for health, and people give them ring-shaped buns, walnuts, dried fruits, etc.</i>

2.4. Natural Tourist Resources

Relief shapes and formations

Natural resources are the second major factor that can be developed and used as tourist attractions of the area.

The Northern and Eastern slopes of the Sakar Mountains, its vast northern foot, the valleys of the Sokolitsa and Sinapovska rivers and part of the downstream of the Tundzha River to the country border with Turkey fall within the borders of Topolovgrad Municipality.

Sakar Mountain is a low, pinnacle mountain with the highest peak Vishegrad (856 m). Despite its small height, it impresses as a well-formed mountain massif with steep Northern and Eastern slopes. The main mountain ridge extends in the direction of SW to SE. You can see the peaks of the Chukata (542m), Mogilite (629m), Bachvata (640m), Kartala (735m), Kamik tepe (759m), Vishegrad (856m), the Yanicherska mound (586m), Dervish mogila (690m), Golyam Karabash (536m), Malak Karabash (464m). Short side ridges with steep slopes that separate the water catchment areas of the larger Sakarski Rivers - Sokolitsa, Hancheto, Zdravchevsko ridge, Golyamana reka, Fishera descend from the main ridge.

The tourist resources, related to the relief in the Topolovgrad Municipality can be used for walking tours.

Attractive rock formations - Cave structures exist in the lands of the villages of Mramor and Ustrem as two of the caves (Cave “Babinski Bozki”, 2 km from the village of Mramor with a length of 324 m and the cave “Suhata Dranchi dupka” - the village of Mramor, 257 m and depth 85 m) can be used for speleological tourism. There are many interesting rock formations in the Sakar Mountains and the Dolnotundja Gorge (Garvan kamak (Raven stone)- Sakartzi, Kartelka peak -

Topolovgrad, Chernite kamani (Black Stones) - Oreshnik village, Brasnarski stol (Barbar Shair), Darkaya terrain - Dolnotunja gorge (to the village of Radovets) Skasaniya kamuk along the Fishera River, rock formations along the Mangara River.

Places suitable for hiking and picnics - There are many places in the area - along the valley of the Tundja River, Sinapovska River, the Sokolitsa River, in many places in the Sakar Mountains, mainly around fountains, dams, landscapes with good visibility: areas – Koriyata /the area is about 1.5 km SW from Topolovgrad /, Marina Cheshma, Kirchova cheshma, Petkova cheshma, Kazankite, etc.

2.5. Hydrological Tourist Resources

The water resources in the municipality are a factor for the development of water sports, fishing, short-term recreation.

The largest river running through the territory of the Topolovgrad Municipality is the Tundja River, which separates the Sakar Mountain from the Dervent Heights. Numerous small rivers take their source from the Sakar Mountain and flow into the Tunja River, flow along the Northern and Eastern slopes of the mountain: Sinapovska, Kurudja dere, Golyamana reka, Zdravchevsko dere, Manastirska Reka, Boaza, Landoon dere, Kasap Dere, Mangara, Fishera, etc. The Sokolitsa River, which flows into the “Rozov Kladenets” dam near the town of Galabovotakes its source from the Northern slopes of Sakar.

There are wells and fountains with very good drinking qualities are built at many local springs. Popular places in the area are: Zaikova Cheshma, Mladenova cheshma, Marina Cheshma, Karakachan Kladenche, Popovo Kladenche, Kalfachevo Kladenche, Chuchurkata, the fountains in Frankovi Darveta, Mengovets, Brayanovets, Bogovets and many others.

Further to combating erosion and the needs of agriculture in the 60s and 70s of the twentieth century, a large number of dams (about 250) were built in the area. Their location is predominantly on the way of small rivers and gullies with unstable water outflow during the year. They are used for fishing, fish breeding, irrigation, watering-place, for temporary winter shelters of migratory and wandering birds. Places with humid grass, bush and tree vegetation, which are suitable for short-term recreation are located along some of the bigger and clean dams. Larger and popular places in the area are: the Sinaopov Dam (Korudja dere with an area of 490 decares) between the villages of Sinapovo and Duganovo, Topuzovi meadows (149 decares), Ginchevi fields (141dka) in the land of Orlov Dol, Fidjelyar (149 decares) in the land of the village of Oreshnik, Midelik (101dka) in the land of the village of Mramor, Hagulite (65 decares), in the land of the village Svetlina, Sakma dere (52 dka), in the land of Kamenna reka, Gorna Asanitsa (Kabite) - 43 decares on the territory of the village of Radovets, etc.

2.6. Climate Conditions and Resources

The climate of the region is favourable for the development of tourism throughout the year.

Climatically speaking, the Topolovgrad Municipality falls into the Transitional Mediterranean climate area. Depending on the peculiarities of the relief, three climatic sub-regions are formed: the warmest – in the valley of the Tundja River, South of Knyazhevo – the Srem Gorge; cooler – at the height of more than 400m and transient – in the Sakar footpaths.

In general, the region of Topolovgrad is one of the sunniest in the country, with dry, hot summer and relatively mild winter.

Droughts and hailstorms are common during the warm half-year. In winter, there are periods of heavy snowfall, low temperatures and large snowfalls. Spring is characterized by a rapid rise in temperatures and a secondary maximum of precipitation. Autumn, for the most part, is dry and fairly warm. There are a lot of clear days during the year, especially in the higher parts. Mists fall more often in the valley of the Tundja River and the lower currents of Sokolitsa and Sinapovska. Because of the openness of the area, there are no pronounced temperature inversions. Air pollution is minimal, especially in the higher parts of the mountain and in the Southern part of the municipality.

2.7. Flora and Fauna

Flora and fauna of the Topolovgrad municipality are a very good option for the development of ecotourism.

About 600 species of higher plants, which make up 14% of the highest flora in the country, are found in the region. It is characterized by a variety of Hungarian oak forests, mixed Hungarian oaks and cerris forests, hornbeam, mixed forests of *Quercus pubescens* and hornbeam. Here you can find plant species, rare for our flora. The natural bluebottle is a Balkan endemic, included in the European list of rare, threatened species. The only locality of the species in Bulgaria is in the Sakar Mountain, the "Smartniyah zavoi" (Death Turn). Many species such as *Tragopogon sibirnyi* Hayek, *Anthemis rumelica*, *Heptaptera triquetra*, *Alkanna sibirnyi* and *Alkanna primuliflora*, *Sedum kostovii* Stef., *Verbascum purpureum*, *Verbascum lagurus* /included in the European list of rare, endangered and endemic species, category rare/, *Achillea biebersteinii*, *Dracula simia*, *Orchis tridentata*, *Himantoglossum caprinum*, etc. are rare or endangered species, some of which are included in the annexes of the International Convention SITES. From the Balkan endemics in Sakar we can find a *Crepis stojanovii* and from the Bulgarian endemics – *Alopecurus thracicus*.

The fauna is represented by many protected, rare and endangered species. Here you can find Central European, Mediterranean, sub-Mediterranean and Iranian-Turanian species. The insects of the invertebrate animals are the most numerous, and the most characteristic are beetles from the family of Tenebrionidae, represented by many species. There are endemic species among the butterflies. *Villosa trabalis*, *C. ornatum* and others are protected.

There are 10 amphibians of all 17 amphibian species found in the country. Reptiles are represented by 22 species out of a total of 36 for the country. Because of its Southern location, the Sakar Mountains area and the adjacent river valleys is one of the richest in reptiles in the country.

Here are 5 species included in the Red Book of Bulgaria. The ornithofauna is represented by 210 species of a total of 410 species for the country, 59 of which are included in the Red Book of Bulgaria, and 96 are of European significance. 11 species are included as threatened in the whole world. Sakar provides suitable habitats for 76 species listed in Appendix II of the Biodiversity Act, requiring special protection measures. The region is one of the richest in birds of prey and Mediterranean species in the country. Here are the most populous populations of *Aquila pomarina*, *Buteo rufinus*, *Hieraaetus pennatus*, *Milvus migrans*. The globally endangered *Aquila heliaca* has found one of its last hideouts and has become a symbol of Sakar and Topolovgrad.

There are 44 species of mammals in the region, 6 of which are included in the Red Book of Bulgaria and in the World Red List (*Myomimus roachi*, *Spermophilus citellus*, *Spalax leucodon*, *Myotis emarginatus*, *Rhinolophus hipposideros*). As a subendemic for Sakar, the only endemic mammal in Bulgaria is the Bulgarian *Myomimus roachi*.

Although rarely, in some of the ponds you can meet the otter – a globally endangered species, inhabiting clean ponds.

The area is extremely important for the preservation and conservation of the biodiversity. The biodiversity in the Sakar Mountains and the valley of the Tundja River is favourable for the development of tourism in the area. The resource for the development of hunting tourism is the game wealth in the Sakar Mountain.

The protected areas for conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora on the territory of the Municipality of Topolovgrad, part of the common European ecological network NATURA 2000:

- 1.33 “Tundja River-2”
- 2.33 “Tundja River Gorge”
- 3..33 “Derwent Heights - 1”
- 4.33 “Sokolitsa”
- 5. 33 “Sakar”

Protected areas for the conservation of wild birds:

- 1.33 “Sakar”

Protected areas within the meaning of the Protected Areas Act (PAA), on the territory of the Municipality of Topolovgrad are as follows: 1. Natural landmark /NL/ “Sveta Troitsa”; 2. Natural landmark /NL/ “Karakolyovata dupka” in the lands of the village of Ustrem and the village of Mramor; 3. Natural landmark /NL/ “Brasnarskiyat stol” (Barber's chair) on the territory of the town of Topolovgrad; 4. Protected area /PA/ “Verbascum purpureum field” on the territory of the village of Bulgarska poliana; 5. Protected area /PA/ “Tundja River Gorge”. The area is located in the village of Radovets and Lesovo village and covers 19 000 decares.

3. Material and Technical Base for Recreation and Tourism

3.1. Base for accommodation (places for accommodation, shelter, dining facilities, tourist infrastructure)

Topolovgrad Municipality is rich in resources for development of rural, ecological, hunting and cultural and historical tourism. The recreation and leisure base in the municipality is also good, but the “tourism” industry is still poorly developed.

By 2014, the number of shelters and accommodation places in Topolovgrad is 11, including 3 family hotels, 4 guest houses, 2 boarding houses and 2 houses with private rooms. The total number of beds is 161.

In Sakar Mountain, several huts are used for hunting tourism. Among the main visitors in the municipality are tourist groups from the neighbouring Balkan countries, mainly through the cultural and economic exchange, as well as groups from the interior of the country for recreational tourism in the mountain huts.

3.2. Facilities for Dining and Entertainment

The facilities for dining and entertainment on the territory of the Municipality of Topolovgrad are a total of 79, with 3012 places, mainly concentrated in the town and the Tundja River valley, and are restaurants, snack bars, pizzerias and coffee-bars.

Also, almost all categorized objects are in the “one star” category.

3.3. Tourist Infrastructure – tourist routes, sport facilities, dams, etc.

At present, the tourist routes with the necessary markings in the Municipality of Topolovgrad are four. There are many routes that require the use of guides. The developed tourist routes in the municipality are: Topolovgrad - Paleokastro - Zaykova cheshma, Golyamata Zvezda - Puleva coria - Kaleto peak - Mangura area - Kamik tepe peak - Yorgakev Egrek area – Sakartsi village, Hlyabovo village - Kamenna mogila area – Byalata treva area - Karamanov dam - Gaidarova cave area - Nuchevi cheiri area or to the village of Hlyabovo, Mramor village - Zdravchevsko dere - Bozkite cave – Vehtata tsurkva – the “St. Trinity” monastery.

All sports facilities are located in the municipal centre of Topolovgrad – Fitness hall, “Vis-Vital” Sports Club, “Kids’ World” Sports Center, Sports Hall, Swimming Pool, Stadium with sports facilities, tennis courts and sports grounds for basketball and volleyball.

The dams are particularly attractive for tourists to fish as well as for short-term recreation.

4. Characteristic Features of the Pinarhisar Municipality

4.1. General Information:

The city is known by its fountains and fortresses. The name of the city comes from these Pinar means fountain and hisar means fortress. Pinarhisar has a strong historical and natural background. It is

possible to observe Thracian, Byzantine and Ottoman heritages. And the city is located just south of the Strandja Mountains.

4.2. Location:

Pınarhisar is located in the middle of the Turkish Thrace, south of the Strandja Mountains. Pınarhisar is 185 Km to Topolovgrad, 30 KM to Kırklareli (Lozengrad) city center, 107 KM to Edirne and 188 KM to İstanbul. Pınarhisar is also in the middle of the important towns Vize to the east, Demirköy to the north-north-east, Lüleburgaz to the south, and Kırklareli to the west. Pınarhisar is on the way to İğneada Longoz Forest and Natural Park and many other natural and touristic places in the Strandja Mountains and around.

4.3. Demographic Profile:

150 years ago (before the population exchange) it was a city which Bulgarians, Greek and Turkish people lived together. After the Balkan War and First World War, population exchange happened and most of the Greeks and Bulgarians left their homes as the Turkish people left their homes from Crimea, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece and Bosnia. Culturally you can feel the Balkans in Pınarhisar.

4.4. Transport Accessibility:

It is possible to travel Pınarhisar from Edirne, Kırklareli, Çorlu and İstanbul with different travel companies such as Berk/Görkey and Metro companies from İstanbul, Çanakale Truva Travel company from Kırklareli, Lale Travel from Edirne.

There are also very often shuttles from Vize, Lüleburgaz, Kaynarca and the close villages during the day.

4.5. Important Phone Numbers:

Country and city code: 009 0288

- Pınarhisar Governorship: 615 10 13 (tel), 615 14 05 (faks)
- Pınarhisar Municipality : 615 10 27 – 615 18 04 (tel) , 615 11 34 (faks)
- Kaynarca Municipality : 645 70 01 (tel) , 645 71 52 (faks)
- Pınarhisar Police Dpartment : 615 10 36 (tel) , 615 16 00 (faks) , 155 (emergency)
- Pınarhisar Hospital : 615 10 65 (Tel) , 615 25 56 (Faks) (112 emergency)

4.6. Historical and Touristic Places

Pınarhisar Center:

4.6.1. Pınarhisar Fortress and Walls:

Although the exact date of construction of the castle and fortification remains unknown, it is considered to be a building society belonging to the Byzantine of the 5th century. In the Byzantine period it is assumed that the 2nd Emperor Theodosius was built by Cosmos Dimitriyadis, one of the important

knights in this region. There are spring fountains on the surface of the important spring waters that give the name to the city at the end of the hill where the fortress-wall community named Virisis (Kaynak) is named (now Ali Ozer park).

This castle-city and defensive fortifications built to observe one of the Byzantine outposts were covering a large area from a high hill to the following ovle where the first serious settlement was located. Now, while two of them are damaged and they see three castle-bastion remains that have reached to day-to-day life, we can only see the wall remains extending downward to the ovine by carefully following the present settlements. The most visible of these is the municipality located just south of Ali Ozer Park, located in the military area until recently and on the lower part of the Kirklareli road.

Despite the fact that the castle-bastions where smooth and rough stones are supported by brick joists are in the possession of the General Directorate of Vakings, unfortunately they lack the necessary attention and protection measures today.

It is known that on the slopes of the hill where the castle is, viniculture has been done for centuries. Excavations in this area yielded a 1.5 meter long soil cubes in a solid state. One of these cubes was displayed in the garden of the district governor's office, while the other was sent to Ankara. New excavations to be made at this site will bring new possible findings to daylight.

In spite of all this, it is necessary for the province to find its place in the social life with the vision of a new protection. Otherwise, it will not be possible to get rid of the ongoing devastation and lack of care and to be able to travel around this region in peace and security like the old days. It is necessary to show that this is due to the ignorance of the tourism potential of the province.

4.6.2. *Castle-Wall Remains In Pinarhisar's Villages:*

Çayırkdere Castle, Erenler Castle, Hisarcik Hill Castle, Kömeye Tepe and Manastır Tepe Houses, and Yeniceköy Castle in Yeniceköy residence, except for this fortress-wall fortifications, which were able to reach daily from the center of Pinarhisar. Similar castle-wall remains can be mentioned.

4.6.3 *Cult Areas:*

Pinarhisar and its environs are home to finds dated to ancient times. This region is rich in the formations that are formed by human hand carving of the calcareous rocks encountered in and around Vize. These include the Pekmezdere mausoleum, the Ambarque altar stone, the carved stones and castle stones (Tavşanhisar tepesi mevki and Kokarpınar mevki) located in Erenler village, Kayaarca mausoleum monastery (Indere mausoleum) and cult area near Diyarbakır village Formations and cult areas, etc. ... The remains of the church in Kaynarca are also traceable to the remains that can be reached by daylight but with remnants.

4.6.4. *Tumuluses:*

As we mentioned above, Pinarhisar and its environs are very rich in terms of tumulus pointing to the Trak era. Visa-Lüleburgaz-kırklareli is located within the whole showing a prevalent spread. The tumuli attached to the Pinarhisar center are mostly located along the plains of the Pinarhisar plain. On the other hand, the tumulus to the Islamic mosque in the Islamic village on the skirts of the Istranas provided very important findings about the historical process. While this totally another Tumulus resides in this village, the Akören village tumulus also needs to be investigated. New investigations on tumuli in Pinarhisar's southeast, south and southwest directions, which can be seen visibly, are undoubtedly worthy of conceiving significant findings.

4.6.5. Mosques:

HUNDİ HATUN MOSQUE: There is no definitive information about the construction history of the Hundi Hatun Mosque, which is originally square planned. In contrast, it is highly probable that it is a work belonging to the 15th century. The buildings belonging to the General Directorate of Foundations are among the registered monumental works. Despite its departure from the original form, it is located in the western part of the well-preserved mosque, and has a special place with tombstones with inscribed forms. The tombstones belonging to the personalities of the Crimean descent, which have an important place in the last period of Pinarhisar and which are believed to be important in the past periods of the city, carry an artistic style. Some of these headsets belong to the following personalities:

-For Giraffe (Death: H 1183 / M 1769) -Selamet Giray Han (Death: H 1181 / M 1767) -Trifacial grave of Rifat Hanim (Death: H 1319 / M 1901) - Hacı Numan Efendi zade İbrahim Ağa ' Tombstone of marble - Marble Sanduka

SADIK AĞA MOSQUE: Today, the construction date of the mosque located on the Vize road in front of the Atatürk Primary School is not final but it is accepted as the end of the 14th century. The property belongs to the General Directorate of Foundations with a square plan, single minaret and single dome, and is a registered monument.

4.6.6. Circles And Cemeteries:

Binbir Oklu Ahmet Baba Turbes: Binbir Oklu Ahmet Baba Tomb is located in Erenler village 4 km east of the village. The former name of the village, Tekke, and the new name Erenler are thought to have taken from this monument and the spiritual personality of the locality sprouting around it. Although it is not very clear who this historical person is, it is accepted that he was an important military personality who lived in the second half of the 14th century and had significant usefulness in the conquest of the region and in the Turkification. According to the legend, this person who showed superiority in the battle he has entered into with the enemy, was killed but only in the place where his martyrs fell - in a way that we did not use - the Ottoman Sultan built this closed tomb. According to another opinion, Haydar Baba and Kofçaz in Pinarhisar are brothers with Topcu Baba in Topçular village.

Haydar Baba Turbe And Ottoman Cemetery: It is military and spiritual personality like Binbir Okulu Ahmet Baba who is supposed to be brother of Haydar Baba. Located at the peak of a hill near the Balıklı mevki in the district center, the kabri is located in an old graveyard thought to belong to the

Ottoman era. This is where Ramadan was thrown in the traditions of the old Ramadan tradition and it was taken as an area where the spiritual feeling and heroism feelings were tried to be kept alive. This tradition is now abandoned.

4.6.7. *Poyralı and Cevizköy Balkan Martyrdoms:*

The Balkan War Cemeteries located in the Poyralı village and Cevizköy settlements of Pınarhisar were prepared in the name of remembering the bitter memories and heroisms of those years. Poyralı village martyrdom was opened in 1981 in the village called Yenibağlık to spare the bitter memories of the Balkan war. This martyrdom is the eternal resting place of the 3 villages that have been martyred in this village besides their spiritual memory. Cevizköy martyrdom is located in Cevizlik district of the same name village. Here we are reminded of our 85 soldiers who have been ambushed in the Balkan war years. The martyrdom in Cevizköy, which was important in the defense of the Pınarhisar-Lüleburgaz line in the Balkan wars, was opened in 1985.

4.6.8. *Koloğlu Primary School:*

The Arabian Kaymakam was established in 1913-1917 as the Turkish Prime Minister and became a very popular personality in the region with the Pınarhisar Governorate. The school, which was built by Sadullah Koloğlu, still serves as an education center. The two-storey school building, which is overfed by the style of its period, is built in a rectangular form and is in the foreground with its ornaments.

4.6.9. *Practical Girl Art School:*

Although the exact date of the building is unknown, another building that is likely to be built during the same period as the Koloğlu Primary School is the Building for the Practical Girl's School of Arts. The single-storey building that hosts different uses over time is rectangular and shows great similarities with the primary school in Kologlu in terms of style. There is no information about tomb remains in the garden. The building has recently been idle after serving briefly as vocational college. It is imperative that this building be revived with the correct restorations and the memory of Pınarhisar.

4.6.10. *Poyralı Village Culture House/Museum*

Poyralı village, 6 km east of the province, is a special settlement where the roots fed in the historical process have been most firmly adhered and able to transfer these values daily. After the Ottoman Russo-Russian War (1877-78), 60 families who immigrated from Plevne's rafting in oxen cars came and settled here. A significant number of authors, writers, scholars, and individuals who have made a name throughout Turkey in their economic lives are educated, intelligent, and visionary. On the other hand, the "Poyralı Village Culture House" opened at the end of 2008 in order to hold on to the cultural roots and transfer it to the future, is an ethnography gallery which is especially visited by the visitors to Pınarhisar and holidaymakers going to İğneada.

4.6.11. *Poyralı Village And Kurudere Village Hand Handles*

The Poyrali village and the Kurudere villagers carry a cultural identity through the traditional methods and hand weaves they obtain on the benches. We should also mention here that villagers are instructors in the many courses of Thrace in order to spread these weaves, as they keep a culture alive with their hand weaving in vivid colors. At the bottom part of the Poyrali village culture house you can witness the order of the hand weavings of the village and you can order. In Kurudere village, it is enough to get information from village muhtar to reach those who make efforts in this regard.

4.6.12. *Kaynarca:*

The town has a history dating back to ancient times. Persian Emperor Darius said to the hot and cold water sources known as Teoros, "I have the most beautiful waters of the world in the world of Teoros" he stuck an obelisk. Byzantine and Ottoman periods, settlements in the region are understood from the finds in the area. The rock carved monastery and cult area, the remains of architectural remains from the Greeks are still standing. We also find information about Kaynarca in Evliya Çelebi's travels. Water resources are famous. These resources attract visitors to a countryside cuisine, especially on trout. It is known that rice was grown in the village until recently. In contrast, agriculture and animal husbandry are the main sources of income. It is another value that is known to be especially in the bazaar.

- Kaynarca city center old buildings
- Kaynarca fountains and water canals
- Statues in the city center
- Kaynarca Water Mill
- Cave Church in the city center

4.6.13. *Turistic Places in Villages:*

- Çayırköy Fortress (Çayırdere Village)
- Hisarcıktepe Fortress (Erenler Village)
- Mahya Fortress and Manasırtepe Fortress (Evciler Village)
- Yenice Fortress, Several Thracian Tumuluses (Yenice Village)
- Binbir Oklu Ahmet Baba Shrine (Erenler Village)
- Balcan Wars Martyrdoms (Poyralı and Cevizköy Villages)
- Poyralı Village Culture House and Ethnographic Museum.

4.6.14. *Natural Places*

- Mahya Mountain 1031 m (Peak of the Strandja Mountains in Turkey) Yenice Village
- Fatmakayalar (Fatma Rocks) Evciler Village
- Strandja Mountains and Forest

4.6.15. *National Days/Week Celebrations*

- 23 April National Childrens Day
- 19 May National Youth and Sports Day
- 29 October Republic Day
- 30 August Victory Day
- 8 November Pınarhisar Liberation Day

5. *Festivals:*

- Kaynarca Water Festival - April/May (2 days festival all citizens invited)
- Pınarhisar Culture, Art and Youth Festival – 23-27 August 2017 (4 days festival all citizens

invited)

6. *Hotels:*

- Akkuş Hotel, 24 rooms Capacity, 0090 288 615 12 34 - 0090 533 558 18 26
- Konfor Hotel, 31 Rooms Capacity, 0090 288 615 32 00 – 0090 544 810 28 40 – 0090 542
- Rüya Park Motel, 17 rooms Capacity, 0090 288 615 29 29, 0090 535 520 80 56 , 0090 533

280 55 11

777 24 30

7. *Restaurants:*

Pınarhisar has a richness to be considered in terms of eating and drinking places and taste stops.

It is worthy to say that Pınarhisar adds value to meat and dairy products of the Thrace region. Kırklareli's famous köftes, prepared in various forms, are ridden in the towns and villages. Each of the meatball saloons located in the district center distill the taste with the concept of a craftsman's shop, but the most famous among them is "Zahit's place". For casserole dumplings in the casserole, "Place of the Hunter" and "Yayla Bucher" located in Yeniceköy is among the ones we can suggest.

Milk and dairy products are also important flavors of Pınarhisar. You can find the delicious cheeses of Kırklareli in the district center and villages. Let's share here that you can find this "goat cheese" which is trapped in village kitchens by asking in villagers where dairy farming is prevalent and where this flavor should be deserved among other kinds of cheese.

Another richness in the local cuisine is the trout cuisine, which continues to distribute flavor until the end of the century, especially about a quarter century before Kaynarca. The trout that grows in the famous spring waters of Kaynarca attracts the taste buds with their own preparation, ambiance of arranging a rural garden. Another place where you can taste your trout is "Place of the Hunter" at Yeniceköy Magnetic field location. On both sides of the stew are stewed trout, along with stew mushrooms, which must be tried. You can find "Çıldır Alabalık Restaurant" which is located in Kaynarca residence, but only at certain times, "Çıldırın Kebabı" which is one of the tastes of Kırklareli cuisine.

Poyrali village has already dropped the word "beet molasses". In this village, from October to the middle of winter, molasses distilled with the traditional traditional taste in home production is at the beginning of the flavor called "Poyral Village Pancar Pekmez" in many parts of Trakya. On the other hand, like Kurudere and Erenler, the villagers are also other taste stops that prepare beet molasses. In this regard, it is possible to reach the producers through village headmen.

List of the Restaurants;

ALİ SEFA Restaurant
AYÇA KEBAP Restaurant
BALOĞLU DÖNER Restaurant
BEYLİK Boucher Restaurant
CAN KÖFTE Restaurant
ÇEVİRGEN Restaurant
DENKTAŞ Restaurant
DÖNENCE Cafe
DURAK Restaurant
EVİM KÖFTE Restaurant
FÜTÜŞÜN YERİ Restaurant
HANİMELİ Restaurant
HİSAR KEBAP & PİDE Restaurant
KARADENİZ PİDE KEBAP Restaurant
KARDEŞLER Cafe
KASAP YILMAZ DENKTAŞ
KÖFTECİ ZAHİT :
LEZZET KÖFTECİSİ
MERT SİMİT EVİ
ŞEN Boucher Restaurant
TUMBA Restaurant
ISTRANCA Farm Milk Products
KARAKAŞ Cheese
ÖZDENİZLER PEYNİRCİLİK
ASMA ALTI Restaurant
AVCI'NIN YERİ Meat&Fish Restaurant
HAVUZBAŞI Meat&Fish Restaurant
KAYNARCA ALABALIK ÇİFLİK Restaurant
SALİH ABİ'NİN YERİ (Köfte ve Çevirme) Restaurant
ŞEN Boucher
YAYLA Boucher

8. Analysis of the opportunities for development of tourism in the cross-border region Topolovgrad-Pinarhisar, based on the available resources

The preserved nature in the municipalities of Topolovgrad and Pinarhisar provides people with the opportunity to live in a normal and healthy environment. Also, today the preserved natural environment is a source and prerequisite for economic and social development.

It is because, in many areas of the world, nature is already damaged to a certain extent and this has led to some adverse results, there is a growing interest in areas with a preserved natural environment. Ecologically cleaner agricultural products are increasingly being sought, more and more tourists want to spend their vacation in the preserved natural scenery. The natural environment is a fortune for the municipalities of Topolovgrad and Pinarhisar. However, this wealth must be preserved.

There is a growing interest in certain forms of tourism, for which the natural environment is a prerequisite. Its destruction or damage is absurd and pointless because it will lead to loss of interest to the area.

As the most important factors for tourism development in the cross-border region Topolovgrad-Pinarhisar, the environment, historical preserved attractions, ethnoresources, hospitality (including accommodation, food, services), the value of products and services in tourism can be pointed out.

Improvement of public services (communications, sewerage), updating and placement of signage/signposting signs, development of tourist products and packages, provision of initiatives for small and medium-sized businesses, increasing the capacity of shelters, accommodation and dining facilities in the municipalities of Topolovgrad and Pinarhisar, protection of natural and protected areas and preservation of local culture/heritage is required.

An important factor for the development of tourism in the cross-border region is the creation of the necessary institutional environment. It is necessary to create tourist information centres in both municipalities, as well as information points in some of the most important villages with potential for development of tourism.

The presence of diverse natural and anthropogenic resources, concentrated on a relatively small territory, allows the development and practicing of an extremely wide range of ecological and sustainable tourism types, both in the Municipality of Topolovgrad and in the municipality of Pinarhisar:

- hiking and ecologic tourism
- scientific and informative
- botanical
- ornithological
- observation of butterflies, amphibians and reptiles, mammals, etc.
- geological and mineralogical
 - sports tourism
- water – sloping down with kayaks, boats and rafting. Opportunities for sports fishing.
- cycling tourism - a prerequisite for its more active development is the developed system of rural and forest roads.
- horse tourism – great opportunities for horse riding bases and companies, providing horse tourism.
 - photo tourism
 - cultural tourism
- visiting settlements
- visiting museums, historical and archeological monuments, sites of historical and cultural significance, including pilgrimage sites tourism;
- local crafts – demonstrations and hobby courses;
- festivals, shows, etc.
- introduction to the authentic folklore



- local cuisine -
- Hobby courses, etc.
 - Rural tourism – the typical architecture is well preserved in most of the villages on the territory of Topolovgrad Municipality and Pinarhisar Municipality. Some of them already offer accommodation in a country house.
 - ecotourism: walking and other forms of mountain tourism; excursions to observe wildlife, flora and fauna; specialized excursions of interest such as ornithology, protected plant species, herbs, etc .; tourist excursions based on mixed programs where sports activities, cultural events are offered along with contacts with nature or combined with agrotourism and rural tourism.

The analysis of tourist resources, as well as the analysis of their characteristics, reveal the significant tourist potential of the Trans-border region Topolovgrad-Pinarhisar.

The conclusions in this report are that it reveals a unique opportunity for design, planning and development of a unique tourist product and transformation of the cross-border region Topolovgrad-Pinarhisar into a successful tourist destination not only of local, but also of national and international importance.