

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARPATHIAN REGION IN SERBIA

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This paper analyzes natural and anthropogenic tourism resources in the Carpathian region in Serbia, as well as legal and institutional frameworks which need to be strengthened with the aim of ensuring sustainable tourism development of the region. The sustainable tourism development will necessitate the linking of stakeholders within and at the level of the region, along with an adequate support at the national level in order to take advantage of numerous opportunities offered by an increasingly intense cross-border cooperation. Taking into account the greater number of protected areas and those planned to be protected in the Carpathian region, as well as specificities of tourism development in these areas, special attention in the paper has been given to sustainable tourism development of protected areas.

Key words: sustainable tourism, Carpathian region, clusters, local communities, multi-sectoral approach.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most dynamic industries in the global economy. Due to accelerated tempo of contemporary life and environment pollution in urban agglomerations, a growing number of people seek to spend their time in nature, in contact with an authentic lifestyle based on traditional values. The concept of holidays has been changed. Today, holidays are expected to offer new experiences and knowledge in all fields. The tourism offer has been increasingly diversified towards the development of various forms of nature tourism¹, as well as cultural and rural tourism.

Regardless of forms in which it develops, tourism must meet sustainability criteria. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines **sustainable tourism** as a tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems (Tourism New South Wales, 2006). Sustainable development, protection and

planning of tourism areas is based on the following principles:

• **Principles of development:** economic sustainability; social and cultural appropriateness; environmental acceptability; encouraging the tourism destination development in order to create competitive tourism products, as well as institutional and functional organization of tourism area offer; development of all-year round tourism offer; creating conditions for integrating the tourism with complementary sectors of economy and society – through partnership between the public, private and non-governmental sectors; strengthening the cross-border cooperation in tourism and complementary activities; harmonizing the tourism development regulations with European standards; and ensuring public participation in conceiving and implementing sustainable tourism spatial development.

• **Principles of protection:** organization, planning and use of tourism areas by full implementation of criteria and standards for environmental protection, as well as the protection of nature, natural and cultural heritage; ensuring the protection, presentation and integrated management of the cultural and natural resources in the interest of sustainable tourism; conservation and revitalization of natural and cultural resources by generating income from tourism.

• **Principles of regulation:** valorization of

natural and man-made tourism resources classified according to their value and contents (as a starting point in identifying the tourism areas); integrated strategic planning of tourism development along with equally considering social, economic, spatial, environmental and cultural aspects; monitoring and implementation of international principles, methods and models of sustainable tourism, with critical specifications for conditions in Serbia.

Attracting visitors and investors, as well as engaging local entrepreneurs in tourism and complementary activities, contributes to economic development and social stability of local communities. However, tourism development, if inadequately managed, can have negative effects on the environment and cultural values, especially in environmentally vulnerable areas.

Aiming at promoting the sustainable (environmentally friendly, economically viable and socially responsible) tourism, the UN Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted in 2004 the

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Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development in areas of importance for biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, as well as in protected areas, including vulnerable coastal and mountain ecosystems, but also in any area where tourism development may have impact on biodiversity. According to the CBD Guidelines, in order to be sustainable, the tourism development should involve a coordinated process of formulating the policy, planning and management based on participative approach (CBD Secretariat, 2004).

FRAMEWORKS AND RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Geographical determinants and development potential

For the analysis of tourism potentials of the Carpathian region in Serbia a wider definition of Carpathian region geographic framework²⁾ was used. Thus considered, according to orographic elements, watersheds and administrative-territorial division, the region can be conditionally divided into 11 sectors as follows: Šomrda, Liskovac, Miroč, Homolje mountains, Veliki and Mali Krš, Deli Jovan, Beljanica, Kučaj mountains, Rtanj, Tupižnica, Ozren and Devica, as shown on Figure 1.

Although sparsely populated area with undeveloped local infrastructure, particularly in its interior, the Carpathian region has significant development potential. The Danube river (with the most attractive part of its course within the Lower Danube Basin), sources of natural mineral water, hilly and mountainous areas, forests and natural and cultural resources of outstanding value, together with spiritual values, as well as traditional architecture and diverse offer of food and wines with geographical indications, provide a good basis for tourism development. High levels of environmental vulnerability, as well as demographic and structural limitations highlight the importance of sustainable development of tourism and agriculture, which ensures their mutual support in the realization of sustainable regional development (Popović et al., 2010a).

Taking into account specificities of tourism development in protected areas, these areas, as well as areas planned to be protected in the Carpathian region, deserve special attention. According to the provisions of the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (2010-2020), the following areas keep the status of protected areas (of 500 ha and more) in the plan period: the "Đerdap" National Park, the "Ozren Meadows" and "Lepterijska-Sokograd"

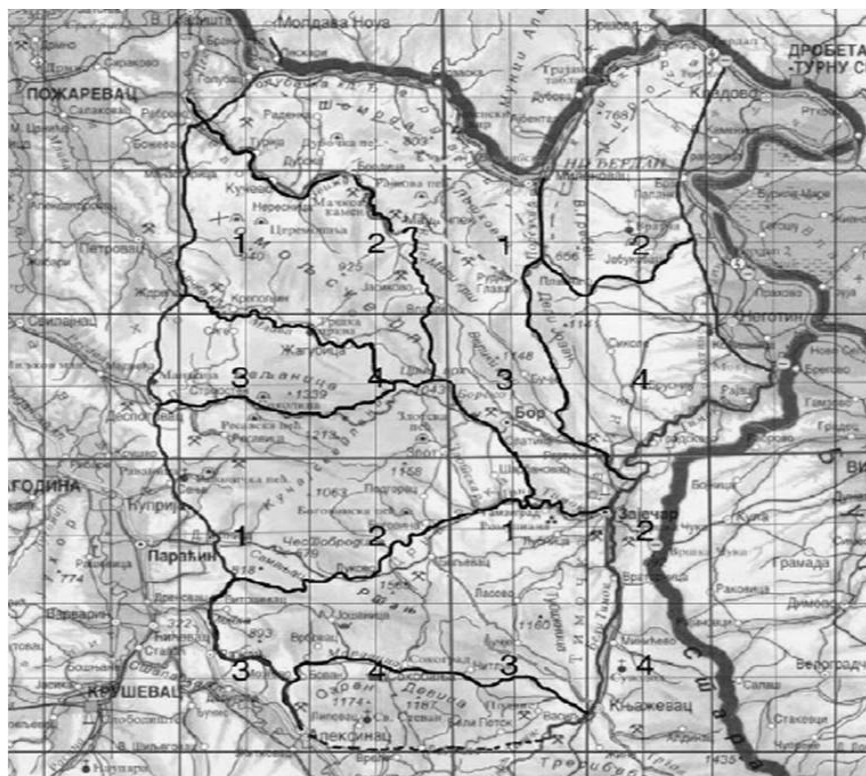


Figure 1. Wider area of the Carpathian region in Serbia
Source: REC-EUR.AC, (2006)

landscapes of outstanding values and the "Resava" and "Lazar's Canyon" monuments of nature. The status, spatial coverage and protection regime are to be defined for the following mountains: Rtanj, Kučaj mountains, Deli Jovan, Ozren-Devica, Tupižnica, Stol, Mali Krš, and Veliki Krš as well as for the areas of Vitovnica Gorge and Romulijana-Gamzigrad.

The following are proposed to be entered on the Ramsar List: Đerdap Gorge (the Danube 1050-950 river km), Mala Vrbica Fish Pond and the Danube 930-845 river km (Negotinska krajina region); Đerdap and Kučaj mountains on the List of Biosphere Reserves, while NP "Đerdap" on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Besides Gamzigrad, which is inscribed on the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List, the Negotin pinnice (settlements consisting of wine cellars such as Rajac, Rogljevo, Štubik, etc.) and the riparian area of the Danube (Golubac, Lepenski vir, Diana and Pontes) are also among the priority cultural areas which should enjoy special treatment (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, 88/2010).

Protected areas create a positive regional image, while sustainable tourism development contributes to the promotion of protected areas and to greater employment opportunities for local population, as well as to overcoming regional development problems. For successful implementation of this tourism development concept in practice, it is

necessary to engage a wide range of stakeholders in the process of creating key tourist products and multi-sectoral approach (Popović, Milijić, 2010b).

Legal and institutional frameworks for sustainable tourism development

The principles of: **sustainable tourism development** (balanced economic development, conservation of natural and cultural resources and development of local communities); **integrated tourism development and development of accompanying activities** (transportation, trade, agriculture, crafts, and public services); and **partnerships between the public and private sectors and civil society** in planning, design and marketing tourism products, are defined in the **Law on Tourism**. According to the Law, integrated planning and proclamation and sustainable use of tourism areas are based on concepts contained in the national *Tourism Development Strategy*. The Strategy is realized through strategic master plans, marketing plans, programs for tourism product development, as well as spatial and urban plans (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, 36/2009, 88/2010).

The Carpathian region has not been considered as an integral tourism area in the above-mentioned planning and development documents. Greater part of this area belongs to

Eastern Serbia tourism cluster³⁾, while a smaller part, to the northwest, to the Belgrade tourism cluster⁴⁾ (Figure 2).

This division is functional and partly statistical, and not strictly physical, given that tourism areas (destinations/regions) most frequently comprise territories of two or more municipalities, and not rarely the territories within more than one region, meaning that the tourism area and/or its part are located within two or more administrative territorial entities.

Strategic master plans cover tourism destinations/regions of *Lower Danube Basin*, *Stig-Kučaj mountains-Bejlanica*, *Sokobanja* and cultural-historical route *Roman Emperors Route (Felix Romuliana)*. Greater or smaller parts of the listed tourism areas are linked with boundaries of the Carpathian region. Strategic master plans also represent an important basis for elaboration of spatial and urban plans within tourism destinations and tourism regions⁵⁾. In the part of tourism region which is at the same time a protected area, the protection regimes are prioritized and prescribed by regulations on the protection and use of natural and cultural values of protected areas.

In considering the sustainable tourism development, a particular problem lies with legal regulations related to obligation of carrying out a strategic impact assessment of plan/program document (based on the Law on Strategic Impact Assessment and Law on Planning and Construction), which (most frequently declaratively) applies only to spatial and urban plans, but not also to master plans for tourism, thus creating problems in their implementation⁶⁾. The role of strategic impact assessment should be to create causal links between environmental protection and development planning, spatial regulation and construction, by determination of measures for neutralizing the impacts, that might be caused with certain activities and interventions in space (Maksin *et al.*, 2009).

In the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, the clusters/destinations/ products are conceived in such a manner that "they themselves establish their market positioning and own competitive advantages in order to be different from their competitors and successfully counteract the competition" (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, 91/2006). However, due to overtaken international obligations related to sustainable tourism development in the Carpathian region, i.e. possibility for developing the specific tourism products/destinations, such as sustainable tourism in protected areas, the tourism entities both within and at the level of Carpathian region have to take joint actions.

Serbia is signatory of the **Carpathian**

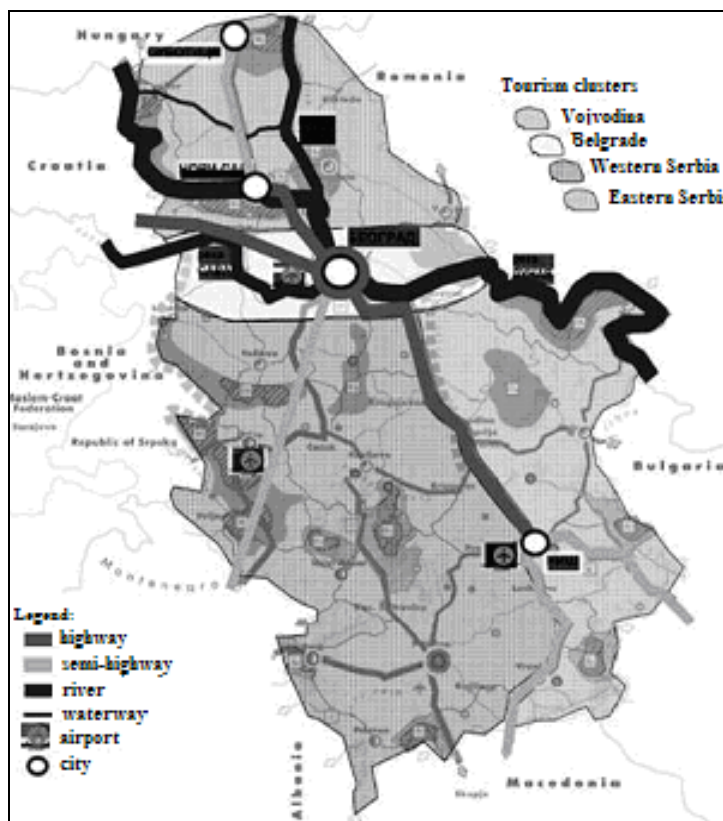


Figure 2. Tourism clusters of Serbia

Source: Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, (2006).

Convention (2007) and its **Protocol on Sustainable Tourism** (2011). The Protocol envisages a number of obligations for signatory countries, related to regional and cross-border cooperation in:

- Promoting the Carpathian region as destination of sustainable tourism based on unique common natural and cultural values, tradition and historical heritage of the Carpathians;
- Developing regional integrated tourism products and services and common high quality standards, regional tourism brands and promotional strategy, as well as marketing patterns;
- Enhancing the contribution of tourism to sustainable development of local economies in the Carpathians by ensuring an integrated development of infrastructure and accompanying activities and promotion and branding of products of local producer associations, especially traditional agricultural and craft products;
- Ensuring the contribution of tourism to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and landscapes in Carpathians, particularly to protected area management, amongst other things, by incorporating the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development into tourism development strategies and plans;
- Developing the Carpathian code of good practice

in sustainable tourism, etc. (UNEP-ISC, 2011a).

It is also envisaged to adopt the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Carpathians. The signatory countries are required to ensure the successful implementation and supervision over the implementation of obligations set in the Protocol on the territory of the Carpathian region through appropriate legal and institutional measures.

Serbia has participated in defining and implementing the **Danube Strategy** calling for specific actions in the Carpathian region in different fields, including tourism. In addition to determining the strategy for sustainable development of tourism in the Carpathians, as a priority action in the field of tourism, initiated by the Danube Strategy, the Strategic Action Plan for the Carpathian area lists project ideas related to the development of the Carpathian tourism cluster (*Via Carpatica, Greening the Carpathian Tourism Industry – Ecocertification and Marketing Scheme*), education and promotion of best practices in the development of environmentally-friendly tourism in the Carpathians as priority actions in the field of tourism, initiated by the Danube Strategy (UNEP-ISC, 2011b).

Special attention is given to the cooperation in developing the **sustainable tourism in**

protected areas of the Carpathian region. Sustainable tourism development is among priorities for cooperation between members of the **Carpathian Network of Protected Areas** (CNPA)⁷. The CNPA Medium-Term Strategy envisages actions related to the promotion of protected areas as a model of sustainable development and strengthening of international cooperation, as well as a participative process in planning the development of local communities (UNEP-ISC, 2011c). In wider Europe, important activities in this field are carried out within the **European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas**, instruments whose activities are coordinated by EUROPARC Federation. The membership in EUROPARC Federation is a precondition for membership in the Charter, as well as for participation in activities of the Protected Area Network created within the Charter (European Charter Net)⁸.

Regardless of spatial and functional organization of tourism in the Carpathian region envisaged by national legal framework, it is obvious that the future sustainable tourism development will require linking of stakeholders within and at the level of the Carpathian region in Serbia, with appropriate support at the national level so as to take advantage of numerous opportunities provided by the dynamic international cooperation in this field. To this end, one of possible steps is to form tourism cluster, i.e. to consider the Carpathian region as a primary tourism area which will enable the networking of tourism destinations/zones. Through realized synergy, cluster ensure the quality of tourism products and services, as well as facilitate the introduction of innovations and exchange of knowledge, thus leading to increasing stability of regional economy and improvement of the quality of life of population and visitors. The Carpathian tourism cluster would also represent a framework for programs and projects of cooperation at the level of the Carpathian region as a whole. Practical implementation of this idea necessitates harmonization within institutional and organizational frameworks, as well as establishment of an adequate **Regional Development Institution** for coordinating development of tourism and accompanying activities at the level of the Carpathian region in the capacity of a regional **Destination Marketing Organization** (DMO) along with a support of the **Tourism Organization of Serbia** (TOS).

Prospective Forms of Tourism

Starting primarily from facts that: the area is spatially and geographically heterogeneous; natural and anthropogenic resources are

numerous and valuable, but have been very little valorized so far; geographic position offers strategic possibilities for animating a large portion of tourist demand; and that until now the tourism has to a great extent developed in an uncontrolled manner, i.e. without inadequately pursued market and demand policy, it is necessary to carry out the territorial differentiation of the region so as to create possibilities for more precisely specifying the appropriate measures, policies and marketing and management strategies, which will contribute to the tourism development. To this aim, a preliminary division of the Carpathian region (including Kluč and Negotin lowlands as integral part of Carpathian landscape) into seven zones has been carried out⁹, which would be a basic level of planning and coordination between activities of the TOS and future DMO, i.e. tourism cluster of the Carpathian region (Figure 3).

The Zone I is made up of the area adjacent to the Danube river (the Lower Danube Basin), with "Đerdap" National Park in its center (municipalities of Golubac, Majdanpek and hilly part of municipality of Kladovo). The largest part of zone II (lower part of the Kladovo municipality, municipality of Negotin and

northern part of municipality of Zaječar) is made up of Negotinska krajina region, while the Zone III is made up of Homolje region (municipality of Kučevo and parts of municipalities of Žagubica and Petrovac on the Mlava River). The Zone IV comprises the Beljanica-Kučaj region (parts of municipalities of Petrovac on the Mlava River, Žagubica, Despotovac and the area on the edge of the Paraćin municipality). The Zone V comprises abundant tourism resources of the Bor municipality, while zones VI and VII comprise area on the edge of municipalities of Zaječar and Boljevac, and Sokobanja and Knjaževac, respectively, up to the line Ražanj – Ozren – Devica – Tupižnica, i.e. up to the northern boundary of the Stara Planina Mt. tourism destination. Because of their abundant natural and anthropogenic tourism resources, as well as considering the scope and character of this paper, they will be briefly analyzed, placing the accent on their use-value in terms of tourism development¹⁰.

Zone I The Lower Danube Basin (historical zone of the Danube)

The Lower Danube Basin is characterized by the high quality and large quantities of natural and anthropogenic, active and potential



Figure 3. Tourism zones in the Carpathian region in Serbia

tourism resources found in a unique landscape formed at the breakthrough of the Danube river between the Carpathians and Rodop mountains at the Djerdap Gorge, the greatest and most attractive river gorge in Europe. The following tourism resources stand out:

- **The Danube river with the Đerdap Lake and its riparian area** offer large potential for the development of fishing, nautical and cruising tourism. Special attraction is the width of the Danube aquatorium of about 6 km, between Moldova and Golubac, just before entering the Golubac gorge, as well as the river depth of about 90m (in Kazan), which is the greatest river depth in Europe. The priority is given to the integration of tourism offer of the Danube and its riparian area. A part of the "Eurovelo 6" cycle route runs along the Danube, using the corridor of the Djerdap highway;

- **"Đerdap" National Park**, located along the river course in the direction from Golubac to Kladovo in the area of about 636 km² is characterized by many geomorphological, hydrological and biogeographical resources. Well-preserved eco-systems and landscape diversity provide possibilities for developing different forms of special interest tourism, as well as different types of sporting activities;

- **Cultural and historical monuments and archeological sites** represent a treasury of attractive cultural monuments, particularly those dating back to pre-historic times, Ancient Rome and medieval times (archaeological sites of Lepenski Vir, Diana Fortress, remains of the Trajan's Bridge and Trajan's Table, Golubac Fortress, etc.), but also Serbian ethno-architecture;

- **Settlements on the banks of the Danube** – Golubac, Majdanpek and Kladovo provide possibilities for rest and relaxation and other forms of urban tourism (congresses, excursions, etc.) with smaller-range capacities which would also be a part of the MICE⁽¹⁾ tourism;

- **Large rural area and numerous rural ambience entities, traditional architecture and authentic gastronomy** – represent a significant potential for rural tourism development; and

- **Contents associated with customs and life of locals** – that have stemmed from multiethnicity, offer a wide panoply of cultural events and spiritual values that should definitely be incorporated into different tourism products.

Zone II Negotinska krajina region

The Negotinska krajina region is located at the tri-border point of Serbia-Romania Bulgaria, which clearly indicates considerable possibi-

lities for developing the tourism, particularly transit tourism. In addition, the Negotinska krajina region has plenty of tourism resources, among which the following stand out:

- **Archeological sites** – ancient site of Vrelo Šarkamen, the ancient Roman settlement "Vicus ad Aquas", etc., included in the "Roman Emperors Route";

- **Ecologically preserved hilly landscape** – between the Timok river and the Danube, above the hilly range of Vidrovac-Badnjevo-Bratujevac, up to Deli Jovan and Stol mountains, offer good conditions for the development of rural tourism and different forms of special interest tourism: hunting and fishing, mountain excursions and sports and recreation, etc.;

- **The unique architectural complex of "Negotinske Pivnice"** wine cellars indented for wine production, storage and tasting, dating back to the 19th century. The most famous wine cellars are situated in villages of Rajac, Rogljevo and Štubik and represent a suitable basis for developing the wine tourism and wine routes; and

- **Cultural values** – the town of Negotin is known for a famous Serbian composer Stevan Stojanović Mokranjac and cultural manifestation "The days of Mokranjac", thus offering a good basis for manifestation tourism.

Zone III Homolje region

The zone of Homolje is bounded to the north and east by Homolje mountain range, while to the south by the Resava river and Beljanica mountain range and to the west by Gornjačke mountains. The Homolje region is connected to Stig by the Mlava River, while through the mountain pass "Crni Vrh" it touches the Timočka krajina region. Exceptional conditions for sustainable tourism development are offered by:

- **Homolje mountains** – with ecologically well-preserved landscapes offer possibilities for developing the excursion mountain tourism, ecotourism, different forms of special interest tourism, as well as rural tourism;

- **The Mlava River** and its river source **"Vrelo"** offer possibilities for developing the excursion, fishing and sport-recreational tourism;

- **The Pek River** – with a long history of gold washing which also left a large trace of human heritage, offers a possibility of tourism valorization;

- **The Ceremošnja Cave** – represents a basis for attracting tourists interested in speleology, i.e. special interest tourism; and

- **Rich local specific and exceptionally**

attractive folk customs and many traditional manifestations in picturesque small towns (Kučevo, Žagubica, Petrovac on the Mlava River).

Zone IV Beljanica - Kučaj

This zone is bounded by the Danube to the north, Čestobrodica mountain pass to the south, Homolje mountains to the east, while the Velika Morava River to the west. The following attractive tourism resources stand out:

- **The Beljanica mountain** – the most attractive largest limestone mountain of eastern Serbia, and a potential ski stadium;

- **The Kučaj mountains** – with plenty of speleological sites, specific hydrological phenomena, craggy limestone slopes overgrown with pastures and forests, abundance of game species (the proclamation of the protected area of the "Beljanica-Kučaj" National Park will give an additional impetus to the development of nature tourism);

- **The Resava Cave** – is important for tourism development because of its underground relief and hydrology, but also remains of the earliest human settlements in this part of Europe; and

- **Rural area** – a large and ecologically well-preserved area, suitable for developing the rural tourism and plenty of others forms of nature tourism.

Zone V Bor

The town of Bor with its surroundings is bounded by slopes of Crni Vrh, Mali and Veliki Krš and Deli Jovan mountains (known for the greatest copper ore deposits in Serbia). Among the tourism resources, the following stand out:

- **Bor Lake** located at the foothill of Crni Vrh Mt., with potentials for the development of sport and recreational, as well as holiday tourism;

- **Brestovac Spa** suitable for the development of "wellness" and "spa" tourism;

- **Dubašnica**, as a limestone complex and mountain plateau with abundance of game species (fallow deer, mouflon, chamois, roe deer, wild boar), as well as the *Stol mountain*, offer excellent conditions for the development of hunting, excursion mountain, fishing and other forms of special interest tourism;

- **Lazar's Canyon** as one of the most important centers of plant species diversity in the Balkans offers possibilities for developing special interest tourism (paragliding, photo safari, etc.);

- **Zlot Caves** (Lazar's, Vodena, Mandina, Vernjickica and Hajdučica caves) accessible for speleologists, but not for tourists, etc.

Zone VI Zaječar – Boljevac

The Zaječar-Boljevac zone is intersected by the Crni Timok and Beli Timok rivers which meet and join near the town of Zaječar to form the Timok river. The following potential resources stand out:

- **Felix Romuliana** (Imperial Roman Palace included in the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List in 2007) is one of the four Roman imperial towns in Serbia;
- **Gamzigradska Banja** is a spa nestled in the Crni Timok river valley, known for its sources of healing mineral waters, is a calm place with potential for health and holiday tourism, recreation, sport, hunting and fishing;
- **Monasteries of Svudol and Grliški** – which can be included in the so-called monastery tours within cultural and religious tourism;
- **Cultural values** - Gitarijada in Zaječar is an international festival of non-affirmed rock bands, and one of the most important music events in the Balkans.

Zone VII Sokobanja - Knjaževac

The following resources stand out as an important basis for tourism development:

- **Sokobanja and Rgoška banja** with potentials for spa tourism;
- **Mountains - Ozren, Rtanj and Devica**, suitable for excursion mountain tourism;
- **"Ozrenske livade" and "Lepterijsko-Sokograd" landscapes of outstanding values, the Moravica river, Vrmadžansko Lake and "Ripaljka" waterfall**, together with **park zones in Sokobanja** offer important potentials for developing excursion tourism and its integration with health and recreational tourism;
- **Sokograd medieval fortress** – built in 1413 on the foundations of a Roman castle, enriches the cultural offer of this area;
- **Speleological sites** – Ozren Cave and Seselačka Cave can be used for special interest tourism development; and
- **Cultural values** - "Amam" Turkish bath, dating back to Roman times and located in the central park in Sokobanja, etc.

VISIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROSPECTIVE-FORMS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The Carpathian region has significant, but insufficiently activated potentials and territorial capital for tourism development, which are

based on the following: exceptionally rich natural values and rarities; large and ecologically well-preserved rural areas; plenty of archeological sites; possibilities for a new approach to tourism development, taking into account that it has not been activated on market to any greater extent. The **vision of sustainable tourism** is to increase its role in the development of, particularly peripheral, rural and cross-border areas, which will be based on preserved natural environment and tourism resources of international and national importance.

Pillars of tourism development are the following:

- **completing and integrating the existing offer in the region** (the Danube River Basin with the Đerdap Lake/NP "Đerdap", Sokobanja, Gamzigradska Banja, archeological sites of Felix Romuliana and Lepenski vir, etc.);
- **planning and developing the tourism offer as well as the relating infrastructure**, as major generators of all-year-round tourism offer of the region (nautical and tourism infrastructure on the Danube, diverse contents of offer for lakes, mountains, immovable cultural heritage, particularly ancient Roman archaeological sites on the stretch Knjaževac - Ravna - Gamzigrad - Kladovo - Viminacium, as well as in "Negotinske pivnice" wine cellars, tourist centers - towns and places/traditional manifestations, spas, rural settlements and hunting grounds, transit waterway and road corridors, etc.);
- **joint marketing and promotional activities** for the development of a unified tourism offer and functional integration of offers in the Carpathian region and with surrounding – neighboring regions in Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania;
- **environmental improvement and protection**, as well as **protection and promotion of valuable natural heritage and preservation of areas with natural values of importance for biodiversity and environmental quality**;
- **protection and promotion of cultural and historical heritage**, where it is necessary to advocate more intense valorization, presentation and use of cultural heritage, as well as their regulation (particularly related to archeological sites, churches and rural ethnic heritage).

For the purpose of realizing the concept of sustainable tourism development, it is necessary to obtain spatial-ecological support (reach the trade-offs in integration of development principles and documents, protection and development of tourism areas

by optimally meeting the social, economic, spatial-ecological and cultural needs at national and local levels, as well as by meeting the interests of the market and conditions for cross-border and international cooperation) and institutional support at local, regional and national levels (Maksin et al., 2011).

Sustainable tourism development goals are the following:

- Introducing and respecting the principles of sustainable tourism development, primarily in relation to the rational use of natural resources and preservation, protection and improvement of natural environment and heritage;
 - Complex valorization of natural and created tourism potentials, differentiated according to their values and contents in line with world and local demand trends, standards of international market and socio-economic interests of Serbia and local communities;
 - Organizing the content-based and integrated offer of tourism areas, which contains recognizable motifs and enables affirmation of new tourism products of local and international demand, along with integrating the tourism development with complementary activities;
 - Encouraging the development of tourism regions that provide the most favorable conditions for maximally extending the tourism season, as well as increasing the socio-economic effects of tourism;
 - Improving the quality and quantity of tourist accommodation and catering capacities in destinations already affirmed to a certain extent, as well as activating the new areas containing tourism resources;
 - Improving the conditions for tourism and recreation by opening and developing the picnic spots, building the marinas and wharfs on the Danube, etc., by developing the tourism and communal infrastructure in settlements, regulating the hunting grounds, cultural and historical entities, monuments, etc.; as well as enhancing their quality and accessibility by developing different modes of transportation;
 - Educating the personnel for providing an adequate level of quality of tourism-related services;
 - Improving efficiency in managing the development of tourism areas by coordinating the activities at the level of tourist settlements and tourism destination-region-cluster, by harmonizing interests in nature protection and tourism development; etc.
- Based on the previously conducted analysis of conditions for tourism development, taking into account strategic directions of activities

defined for this region at the national level, as well as overtaken international obligations in the field of sustainable tourism development in the Danube-Carpathian region, the following **prospective forms of sustainable tourism** development in the Carpathian region in Serbia can be identified:

- Cruising and nautical tourism on the Danube;
- MICE and business travel;
- Nature tourism (sport and recreational tourism and special interest tourism, including ecotourism);
- Rural and agro-ecotourism;
- Spa (health/balneological, climate, wellness/recreational and spa) tourism;
- Excursion mountain tourism;
- Touring (circular and linear tourist travel/tours/roads, national parks and other protected areas, mountains, gorges, caves, archeological sites, Roman palaces and monuments, monasteries, the Danube motifs, wine and gastronomy, EuroVelo 6 cycle route, walking, horse riding, hunting, fishing, etc.); and
- Manifestation tourism.

Local authorities initiate sustainable tourism development process, while the success depends on the realized **partnership** between a wide range of stakeholders at the level of local communities, **coordination** between corresponding actors and policies at the national level and of **cooperation** and exchange of experiences with relevant international organizations¹². Economic, social, political and other stakeholder power and influences overlap in this process, but significant benefits in tourism destination management are also created, while potential problems in cluster operations in destination are solved (Bakić, 2009).

Sustainable tourism provides an optimal contribution to local/regional economy in interaction with other activities through fostering a multi-sectoral and participative approach to sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

Rich and diverse natural and anthropogenic resources for sustainable tourism development in the Carpathian region in Serbia have not been adequately valorized and used. The Carpathian region represents a tourism area comprising parts of tourism clusters with destinations/zones, touring routes, tourist places and places for rest mainly of national and international importance, and partly of regional importance. Sustainable tourism, in interaction with complementary activities,

contributes to the rise in employment and growth of the Carpathian economy, seriously affected by depopulation and economic crises. The main precondition for sustainable tourism development is the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders within and at the level of the region, along with adequate support at the national level so as to take advantage of numerous possibilities provided by dynamic international cooperation in this field. One of possible steps is to form tourism cluster, i.e. to consider the Carpathian region in Serbia as a primary tourism area which will enable networking of the Carpathian tourism destinations/zones and joining their efforts to complete and integrate the existing all-year-round tourism offer, develop relating infrastructure and marketing activities, and protect and promote valuable natural and cultural heritage of the region.

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⁷⁾ CNPA comprises: 36 national parks, 51 nature parks and landscapes of outstanding values, 19 biosphere reserves and about 200 other categories of protected areas in the Carpathian region. Amongst them being only NP „Djerdap“ from the Carpathians Serbia, <http://www.carpathianparks.org/>, joined on 21st March 2012.

⁸⁾ <http://www.european-charter.org/about-the-charter/>, joined on 26th March 2012.

⁹⁾ The starting point in zoning the tourism areas has comprised solutions for this area envisaged by the Regional Spatial Plan for the Timočka krajina region (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, 51/2011) and Draft Spatial Plan for the Special Purpose Area of the „Djerdap“ National Park (IAUS, 2012).

¹⁰⁾ Particularly taking into account master plans for tourism destinations/regions of the Lower Danube Basin (2007a), Stig-Kučaj mountains-Beljanica (2007b), Sokobanja (2007c) and Roman Emperors Route (Felix Romuliana) (2007d).

¹¹⁾ MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Congresses, Exhibitions) is a synonym for congress tourism and refers to a specific type of tourism in which a group of people, usually planned well in advance, are brought together for some particular purpose.

¹²⁾ An organized cooperation at the local level is a precondition for using support funds for rural tourism development within the national policy for supporting the rural development. In this, producer associations, clusters and local action groups have a decisive role (Popović et al., 2007; Tomić et al., 2009).

¹⁾ Nature tourism includes a wide range of outdoor activities grouped into categories of the so-called soft adventure and hard adventure tourism, ecotourism, special interest tourism, and wildlife tourism.

²⁾ According the results of DAFNE and NGO Ekolibri-Bionet Project "Support and Capacity Building for Implementation of Ramsar and Carpathian Convention in Serbia" (2004-2006). At the time of signing the Carpathian Convention, only 732.35 km² of NP "Djerdap" and Djerdap Gorge from Golubac to HEPS "Djerdap I", including Novi Sip, were included within the boundaries of the Carpathian Serbia. The Convention envisages the possibility to further expand its geographic coverage, while this project is a part of an initiative in this direction (Angelus, 2006).

³⁾ Tourism clusters, as resource basis and major tourism development areas, represent spatial and functional entities of the unified tourism offer, with tourist destination/regions having related characteristics, urban tourist centers and places, spa tourist centers and places, as well as with comprised segments of circular and linear tourist directions and secondary tourism areas.

⁴⁾ According to the Tourism Development Strategy, Serbia is divided into four clusters: 1) Vojvodina, 2) Belgrade, 3) Western Serbia with Kosovo and Metohija, and 4) Eastern Serbia. According to the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, the territory of Serbia is divided into five tourism clusters, whose formation will be influenced by the market: 1) AP Vojvodina, 2) Belgrade, 3) Southeastern Serbia, 4) Central and Western Serbia and 5) AP Kosovo and Metohija.

⁵⁾ The problem has intensified over the past few years after the elaboration and adoption of numerous general and sectorial strategies and master plans (with different purposes) which are mostly not grounded within the legal framework, and for which the following is not defined the obligation of harmonization with spatial, environmental and sectorial planning basis, or jurisdiction over their adoption and implementation.

⁶⁾ For more details, please see: Maksin, Milijić, (2010).

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