Study of the development potential of adventure tourism in the cross-border region Belogradchik-Chuprene-Knjaževac
This study has been conducted within the framework of the project
ADVISION - Vision for Development of Adventure Tourism,
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1. Introduction

1.1. Objective and scope of the study

The main objective of the study is to assess the potential of the cross-border region for development of adventure tourism by collecting up-to-date and accurate information on the available resources and the stakeholders at the local, regional and national level, identifying the main products, analyzing the weaknesses, challenges and possible measures and solutions for overcoming them, and providing examples of applied and/or applicable good practices.

On this basis, at a later stage of the project, the study will serve for the development of a roadmap for adventure tourism development in the region that will be the starting point for implementation of the main objective of the project - to raise the capacity for sustainable development of tourism in the cross-border region of the Balkan Mountain, and a precondition for achieving the specific objectives - to raise the management and marketing capacity level in accordance with the current trends in the tourist market and maximize the travel revenues that remain in the local economy to strengthen the cross-border supply chain.

The geographical scope of the study is determined by the project’s scope and is concentrated in the administrative areas of Vidin and Zaječar, within the limits of the municipalities of Belogradchik and Chuprene on the Bulgarian side, and Knjaževac, on the Serbian side. With a view to defining more attractive and competitive products, this study also takes into account the possibility of combining resources, attractions and activities that are located in the neighbouring municipalities.

1.2. Methodological notes

The implementation of the study passes through several stages in accordance with the objective and the target scope.

In the framework of the first stage, by applying the desk research method, a number of documents and sources at local, regional and national level were examined, including:

- municipal, regional and national development plans;
- strategic documents in the tourist sector;
- documents from past projects implemented in the region;
- statistical documents;
- websites of municipalities, NGOs (tourist, environmental, etc.);

They were used as a basis to generate the initial information on the resources (natural and cultural), the current state of tourism, and the stakeholders in the region.

As far as "adventure tourism” is a dynamic concept in the tourism theory and practice, the desk research also covered international and national sources in this area in order to identify such definition of “adventure tourism” that is applicable for the study, and to specify the characteristics and scope (such as types of products and activities) of this type of tourism.

At the same time, information about the current trends in the development of adventure tourism was also collected, including on the changes in the tourist profile and models of behaviour, as well as examples of good practices in the development of adventure tourism and in the offering of individual products and services.

The second main stage of the study was a field study which was aimed at verifying the reliability and updating the information collected in the framework of the desk research. In addition, through visits of the main tourist attractions and resources and meetings/interviews with local stakeholders, additional information on the state of resources, product offering and economic activity (incl. projects, investment intentions, etc.) in the region was generated.

The final third stage implied different methods of analysis and was devoted to the assessment of the region’s potential to become a destination for adventure tourism. During this stage, different aspects were taken into account, including
- Quality and condition of resources;
- Potential to be combined with other resources and/or to become a part of a more large-scale product;
- Market potential (interest in the region and/or a specific product), and so on.

Subsequently, on the basis of the expert appraisal, priority products and projects for the region were defined, key weaknesses and challenges were identified, and proposals for measures to overcome them were generated.
1.3. Main restrictions

As a whole, the information on the subject has not been summarized in one place, which complicated its traceability and systematising. Extra attention was also paid to the search for additional sources and the checking of the relevance of the information.

In other cases, e.g. in respect of recent studies devoted to local and national demand, the information is too scarce, therefore the analysis had to be based on indirect and/or more general indicators.

In respect of a certain type of information, mainly pertaining to the financial dimensions of tourism and future investment intentions, either only scarce information was discovered or the access to it was limited.
Adventure tourism.

2.1. Definition and key characteristics.

Adventure tourism is a type of niche tourism which involves exploring or travelling with a certain degree of risk (real or perceived) which may require special skills and physical loading. At the moment, there is no single definition for adventure tourism in the UNWTO reference sources, but the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) defines **adventure tourism as a trip that includes at least two of the following three elements: physical activity, natural environment and cultural immersion.** While the definition of adventure tourism requires only two of these elements, trips involving the three tend to give tourists the most complete experience of adventure tourism.

Among the main characteristics of adventure tourism is the strive to support and promote sustainable practices. This stems from the understanding that without pristine nature and meaningful cultural experiences, the adventure tourism destination will lose its competitiveness.

The connection between adventure tourism and the local human and natural capital, and the commitment to their protection and promotion, make adventure tourism a tool for sustainable and responsible economic growth which brings advantages at any public level.

2.2. Types of adventure tourism. Types of activity.

A recent survey conducted by ATTA in cooperation with researchers from the University of Eastern Carolina shows that, more than any other motivating factor, adventure travellers seek transformative experiences. The main common types of adventure tourism are culinary, cultural, disaster tourism (a trip to a disaster area for different purposes), ecotourism, ethnotourism, extreme tourism, jungle tourism, research tourism, urban tourism, spiritual tourism.

Regardless of the manner in which tourist specialists organize or categorize the adventure trip, **adventure will always be a subjective term for tourists themselves,** as it is connected with the anyone’s individual experience. Adventure for a traveller may seem a usual experience for another. Adventure tourists **cross their own boundaries of cultural, natural and geographical convenience,** and these limits differ from one person to another.
The table below shows the various activities and their classification according to their adventure element, according to ATTA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archaeological expedition</td>
<td>Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in local festivals / fairs</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backpacking</td>
<td>Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird watching</td>
<td>Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping</td>
<td>Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canoeing</td>
<td>Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caving</td>
<td>Hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climbing (mountains / rocks / ice)</td>
<td>Hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruise</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural activities</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco tourism</td>
<td>Soft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational programmes</td>
<td>Soft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmentally sustainable activities</td>
<td>Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing / fly fishing</td>
<td>Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting to know the locals</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiking</td>
<td>Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horseback riding</td>
<td>Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting</td>
<td>Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea water and white-water kayaking</td>
<td>Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning a new language</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orienteering</td>
<td>Soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafting</td>
<td>Soft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research expeditions</td>
<td>Soft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safaris</td>
<td>Soft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sailing</td>
<td>Soft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scuba diving</td>
<td>Soft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snorkeling</td>
<td>Soft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skiing / snowboarding</td>
<td>Soft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surfing</td>
<td>Soft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trekking</td>
<td>Hard</td>
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</table>
The differences between adventure tourism and mass tourism are clear but the differences between adventure tourism and other types of tourism may be subtler, such as for example ecotourism, sustainable tourism, geo tourism, etc. Even though they share some features with adventure tourism as well as with each other, such as minimizing the negative impacts of tourism or increasing the benefits for local communities, these "hallmarks" of tourism have a specific or even a niche market value because they are associated with a certain consumer segment.

2.3. Development trends of adventure tourism

- In recent years, the most remarkable trend in the development of this type of tourism has been its evolution from a trip involving one mandatory element of extremity to a trip in which the understanding of adventure is not necessarily linked with physical loads and challenges.

- As a whole, the lack of a clear operational definition makes it difficult to measure the market size and growth of this type of tourism. Countries in different degree of economic development have been increasingly often giving priority to adventure tourism because they recognize its ecological, cultural and economic value. In the period 2009-2012, the adventure travel market had an average annual growth rate of 65%.

- In 2010, ATTA, George Washington University (GWU) and Xola Consulting conducted the first study aimed at identifying the size of the adventure tourism market. It found that the global value of adventure tourism amounted to USD 89 billion. The study was repeated in 2013 when it found that 42% of travellers were seeking adventures, which gives the sector a value of USD 263 billion - an increase of 195% for two years.

- Tourism adventure supports local economies. In ATTA’s 2014 survey of adventure tourism, adventure tour operators calculated that 65.6% of the total cost of the trip from an adventure package remained in the visited destination/s,
- Today, adventure tourism is a dynamic and fast changing sector with new options that are often added to the possible experiences. Individual companies are often small businesses managed by their owners - entrepreneurs who want to share their favourite places and passions with others. Adventures enable entrepreneurs in rural areas around the world to do the same. Adventure tourism is one of the most rapidly developing tourist sectors as it attracts high-value customers, supports local economies and promotes sustainable practices. In this way, the continuous growth of this sector creates net positive effects not only on tourism, but also on the economies of the destinations, on their population and environment.

- The demand is growing as a result of the increasing global level of disposable income and the growing consumer interest in personalized and transformative (i.e. meaningful, changing in perspective) experiences. In this way, more people can afford a vacation, with an increasing number of those seeking adventure activities. However, the changing consumer expectations, advanced technologies and connectivity as well as the changing demographics on the main adventure tourism markets affect the nature of demand. There is also a growth in the supply, i.e. the establishment of businesses to satisfy and/or generate demand. The barrier to entry in adventure tourism is low, especially in emerging and developing markets, as there is a trend for established tourist companies in the developed countries to include in their product portfolios offers for adventures.

- In the adventure tourism sector, the trend is aimed at disintermediation, i.e. the removal of intermediaries - tour operators or tourist agents - which have been traditionally connecting the consumer with the supplier. Since tourists have access to information and trusted consumer reviews on-line, they are more likely to refer directly to the supplier. A profile of the adventure traveller in the US (study on the market of adventure travels in the United States of America) shows that 71% of American adventure travellers arranged their trips by themselves.

2.4. Tourist profile

Adventure tourism attracts wealthy tourists. Such tourists are willing to pay extra for exciting and authentic experiences. Adventure tour operators report an average of USD 3,000 for
accommodation, with an average trip duration of eight days. Travel costs vary depending on the length, the level of luxury and of the activities, the destinations and the distance from the starting point of the journey to its final destination.

According to the 2013 adventure tourism market research, 57% of adventure tourists were men, and 43% were women. However, the 2014 annual world trade survey, in the part concerning tour operators, reported that 53% of travellers were women, and 47% were men. The 2013 survey showed that 37% of adventure travellers had at least a 4-year degree of higher education, 11% had a professional degree, and the average individual income of a traveller was USD 46,800 per annum.

Additional features of the adventure tourist profile:

- Adventure tourists are young people at an average age of 36 years.
- In comparison with those travelling without seeking adventures, adventure travellers are more likely to use professional services such as guides, instructors, tour operators or other services.
- Adventure travellers plan their travels by doing an on-line research and consulting with friends and family, and they recommend trips by posting on social media sites.
- The percentage of adventure travellers who use Facebook (78%) has more than doubled in the period 2010-2013.
- Adventure tourists still prefer international trips, as 71% of all adventure travellers (79% of hard adventure travellers) hold a valid international passport.
- Only a small part of adventure travellers travel alone, 21% travel with friends, 37% travel with spouse or partner, and 30% travel with their families, including children.
- Adventure travellers rank areas with natural beauty as the most important factor when selecting their latest destination, followed by possible activities and the climate.
- Adventure travellers can also act as important "advertisers" of destinations and activities. 80% of travellers say that they are likely or very likely to recommend to friends and family a trip which is similar to their latest journey. With the aid of technology and social media, 39% would recommend a similar
trip. Adventure travellers are also more likely to recommend a trip by publishing reviews on travel websites.

- The reasons why people choose adventures are various, but the most commonly quoted motivations are recreation, spending time with the family and getting to know different cultures.

- In comparison with those travelling without seeking adventures, adventure travellers are more likely to use professional services such as guides, tour operators or suppliers of highly specialized services. However, when examining only adventure travellers, it was established that 56% of them still cope by themselves.
7. **Inventory of resources for development of adventure tourism**

3.1. **Belogradchik Municipality**

3.1.1. **Main tourist resources**

3.1.1.1. **Natural resources**

The territory of Belogradchik Municipality is distinguished for its high biodiversity. Six protected territories and parts of three protected zones are subject of protection under NATURA 2000. The high biodiversity is a factor for development of specialized types of tourism, incl. adventure tourism, mountain biking, ecotourism, etc.

**Protected territories and protected zones under NATURA 2000**

Belogradchik Municipality includes protected territories of three categories (reserve, natural landmark and protected area):

- **Chuprene Reserve (on the land of the village of Stakevtsi)**

  Chuprene Reserve was established for the conservation of the most northern natural habitat of the Norway spruce (Picea abies) in Bulgaria. It is located along the ridge and the northeastern slopes of Chiprovtsi Mountain, Western Balkan Mountain, on the land of the villages of Chuprene, Replyana, Gorni Lom and Stakevtsi. In the reserve, there is also the most northern habitat of the dwarf mountain pine (Pinus mugo) in the country, while standard beech tree forests can be observed in the buffer zone. In 1977, by decision of UNESCO, the reserve acquired the status of a biosphere reserve. A population of the wood grouse /Tetrao urogallus/ has also been conserved in Chuprene biosphere reserve.

- **The natural landmark "Belogradchick Rocks" (town of Belogradchik, village of Chiflik)**

  The rocky phenomenon “Belogradchick Rocks” is a landmark of the region. They represent rock formations of red-coloured sandstones and conglomerates, formed about 210 million years ago. They cover a territory with a length of around 30 km and a width of 3 km, with a total area of 598.7 ha.

  Part of the natural phenomenon "Belogradchick Rocks" is also the “Lepenishki pech” cave (also known as "Lepenitsa"), which is situated about 4 km southeast of the town of
Belogradchik and about 6 km northwest of the village of Borovitsa, in the "Markashnitsa" area. The cave has been formed in the reddish sandstones - conglomerates, probably about 230 million years ago. A well-marked eco path leads to the cave.

- The natural landmark "Magurata cave" (village of Rabisha)
  It is situated near the village of Rabisha, 25 km northwest of the town of Belogradchik. Magurata is one of the biggest caves in Bulgaria, as the total length of its galleries is about 2,500 m and its total area is over 30,000 sq. m. Naturally formed "halls", numerous galleries (the Triumph Hall, the Bat Gallery, the Hall of Stalactones, the Gallery with the Drawings, the Hall of the Fallen Pine, the Hall of the Poplar, the Throne Hall, the Ceremonial Hall, the Corridor of the Fjords), strange shapes of majestic dimensions (up to 20 m in height and over 4 m in diameter) and resembling people, waterfalls, animals, etc., rank it among the most beautiful caves in the country.

  It is famous for its prehistoric rock drawings dating back to 10,000 BC, and because of that was included in UNESCO’s preliminary list. The drawings depict cult and hunting scenes, records of numeric information, dancing female and male figures, two-headed female image, hunters, animals, stars, tools, plants. Filled with mysterious beauty coming from the centuries, it is also the home of protected animal species - more than five species of bats, cave invertebrates, and there are records of discovered fossils suggesting that the area has been inhabited by prehistoric animals - cave bear, hyena, wild horse, etc.

  “Magurata” is also known for one of the best sparkling wines produced in Bulgaria. One of its halls houses a wine cellar where naturally sparkling wines are produced with the use of a classical technology.

The following sites also have the status of protected territories:

- Natural landmark "Borov kamak" (village of Borovitsa);
- Natural landmark "Waterfall on the Stakevska river in the Belata voda area" (village of Stakevtsi);
- Protected area "Chuprenski buki" (village of Stakevtsi);

Significant natural resources for the municipality are also:
“Rabisha” Dam - an anthropogenic modification of the natural Rabisha Lake. Rabisha Lake has a tectonic origin and is the largest lake of this type in Bulgaria with a total area of 3,246 sq. m and a depth of up to 35-40 m. It offers excellent opportunities for water sports and fishing.

Kozarnika Cave. It is a small cave with a length about 200 m, but it is an important site from the prehistoric era - the findings in Kozarnika claim to be the earliest traces of human presence in Europe - dating back 1-1.4 million years ago - and show that the settlement of the European continent has probably started in the Balkans.

Parts of the following protected zones under NATURA 2000 are located on the analysed territory:

- Protected zone “Western Balkan Mountain and Fore-Balkan” - BG0001040 for the protection of habitats of beech forests, Hungarian and Turkey oak tree forests, semi-natural dry grass and shrub communities on limestone, etc.;
- Protected zone “Makresh” - BG0000521 for the protection of habitats of the Balkan Pannonic oak tree forests, etc.;
- Protected zone “Western Balkan Mountain” - BG0002002 for the protection of birds (among which are the white-backed woodpecker, long-legged buzzard, lesser kestrel, owl, white stork, woodlark);

**Biological diversity and forest resources**

There is a great diversity of species, as one can encounter both rare and protected species. Among the Bulgarian endemic species are: Sempervivum erythraeum, Campanula jordanovii, butterfly orchid (Orchis papilionacea) and Sedum stefco. Among the most interesting Balkan endemic species are: Simphyandra wanery and Siberian melic grass (Melica altissima).

As concerns the fauna, there are around 180 species of birds, 53 species of mammals (of which 14 species of bats), 11 species of amphibians and 15 species of reptiles in the region. Birds are the best represented group. There are also species with global priority of protection. Such are the lesser kestrel (Falco naumani) and the corncrake (Crex crex). A large part of the bird species is of European importance - black stork (Ciconia nigra), red kite (Milvus milvus), hen harrier (Circus cyaneus), hunting falcon (Falco herug), owl (Bubo bubo), barn owl (Tyto
alba), etc. Of the mammals, among the species included in the Red Book of Bulgaria are the otter (Lutra lutra), European pine marten (Martes martes), wolf (Canis lupus), as well as all types of bats. The otter and the lesser mole-rat (Spalax leucodon) are also included in the World’s Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in the category of "vulnerable species".

3.1.1.2. Anthropogenic resources

The cultural heritage in the municipality is concentrated mainly in the town of Belogradchik, the village of Rabisha, the village of Prauzhda and the village of Granitovo.
The Belogradchik Fortress is among the most well-preserved fortresses in the country and represents a solid architectural and historical monument of culture. It is located at an altitude of 610 m above sea level on an area of 10,000 sq. m. It occupies a strategic place between the Balkan Mountain passes "Sveti Nikola" and "Belogradchishki prohod" ("Kadiboaz"). It was constructed in the 1st-3rd century BC as a small fortress. Archaeological studies have led to the discovery of wall foundations, fragments of ceramics, iron peaks of spears and arrows, coins of the Roman Emperors Vespasian, Trajan, Septimius Severus, Gordian III, Decius Trajan.

Its strategic importance has also been assessed by the ruler of Vidin, Ivan Stratsimir /1356-1396/. During his rule, it was further fortified and extended. Two defensive walls /to the southeast and to the northwest/ and ancillary facilities were built.

In 1396, the Belogradchik Fortress was captured by the Ottomans and partially destroyed. Its complete reconstruction and expansion began in 1805 and was completed in 1837. The newly built fortification walls reach a height of 12 meters, a width of 2.5 meters in its base, and are made of well-processed white stone blocks linked with mortar. There are three fortress yards with three gates firmly fortified with solid doors studded with iron strips. The defense capability of the fortress is reinforced by three cannon embrasures and three cannon platforms.

The history of the Belogradchik Fortress is associated with the heroism of the famous haidouk Velko who managed to capture it for a short period of time in 1809. During the Russian-Turkish war /1877-1878/, it was besieged by the Russian and Romanian troops. On 25 February 1878, by virtue of the concluded truce, it was surrendered to the Allied Forces. It
also played an important role during the Serbian-Bulgarian war in 1885 when Serb forces, having managed to make their way through the Balkan Mountain passes, were defeated under its walls.

- **Suleiman’s fortification** (also known as the "Latin kale") is located to the west of the Belogradchik Fortress. Parts of the defense wall have been preserved. A metal ladder with safety rail has been mounted to ensure access to the ruins of the fortification. The site can be accessed by car and there is also a small parking lot. A panoramic platform has been constructed nearby.

- **Anishte area.** It is located close to the Salash-Belogradchik road, at 2 km east of the village of Granichak. Here were discovered the remains of a destroyed ancient road station representing a separate building with hypocaust, consisting of 4 rooms. It is considered to have been a roadside station located on the road Ratiaria - Naissus (now Nis), built and used by the Romans during the 2nd-3rd century and probably destroyed by the barbarian invasions at the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century.

- The **Historical Museum of Belogradchik** currently has the status of a municipal museum with four separate departments - "Bulgarian History 15th-19th century", "Nature", "Archaeology" and "Arts".

The exhibition of the “**Bulgarian History 15th-19th century**” Department is housed in the immovable cultural property "Panov’s House" - a bright representative of the Fore-Balkan renaissance architecture. It was built in 1810. It is a two-storey house, with board-framed walls and two porches, with a first floor built of stone and a projecting second floor.

The exhibition makes us acquainted with the socio-economic development of Belogradchik and the area in the 18th-19th century, with accents placed on traditional farming, animal husbandry and crafts - ironmongery, aba-making, shoe-making, pottery-making, tailoring, goat's hair processing, goldsmithing. The exhibition also offers rich documentary material that reflects the struggles against the Ottoman rule, important moments of the events that have taken place in the town of Belogradchik during the Russian-Turkish liberation war, as well as photos and documents reflecting the battles near Belogradchik during the Serbian-Bulgarian
war of 1885. The icon collection comprising works of masters from the towns of Tryavna and Debar is also worth seeing.

The lapidarium located in the yard of the Panov’s house brings us back to the times of Ancient Rome and its spiritual world.

The exhibition of the Nature Department was opened in 1975 and is housed in the building of the former "Hunters House". At present, the exhibition consists of 520 exhibits, and the fund has around 2,500 more. Of them, 39 are taxidermied species that are protected at a European and world level, 128 of the exhibits (representatives of the fauna and flora) have the status of endangered by extinction under the Law on Biological Diversity. All this makes the collection extremely valuable. In its primary and scientific-auxiliary fund, the Museum stores over 3,000 natural samples and other materials, including: minerals and rocks; palaeontological materials (bones of prehistoric animals, such as cave bear and cave hyena); zoological materials (stuffed animals, fur, skulls); preserved plant species; original photographic materials and photographs taken by the Museum’s employees.

The Art Department disposes with over 180 paintings and graphics, part of which were painted during the annual plein air painting held in Belogradchik Municipality. The exhibition includes paintings of Vladimir Dimitrov the Master, Stoyan Venev, Ivan Hristov, Yoan Leviev, Bahit Bapishev, etc. The building was built in the 1920s and is distinguished for its wonderful architecture. It was renovated under the “Beautiful Bulgaria" project.

- **Astronomical Observatory** - the Observatory of the Institute of Astronomy to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences disposes with three telescopes, computer for processing and storage of data collected from electrophotometric observations, and a CCD camera. It observes the Moon, the ring of Saturn, the satellites of Jupiter, the crescent of Venus, comets, stars, star clusters, galaxies. Currently, the capacities of the observatory as a tourist site are not fully exploited;

- **Hadji Hussein Mosque** - built in 1751. Partially restored;

- **Monastery school village of Rabisha**, It was built in 1830. The building was restored with the option to set up a museum collection;

The architectural heritage of Belogradchik Municipality is supplemented by several tens, however poorly preserved, Renaissance houses in the villages of Granitovo, Prauzhda, Salash, Veshtitsa and Oshane.

**Events**

Interesting festivals and club events are held on the territory of the municipality, as some of them are of international and national importance:

- *Folklore Festival "From Timok to Iskar - In the Footsteps of the Thracians"*, which is held with the aim of preserving and promoting traditions associated with the authentic folklore.

- *International Fair of the Kadiboaz Pass*, village of Salash - village of Novo korito, held on the Saturday and Sunday before the last of the month of July. The event is an expression of the friendly relations between the municipalities of Knjaževac and Belogradchik and is held annually. The border is opened for this meeting and may be passed only with an identity card. Visitors have the opportunity to watch sports competitions, performances of folklore ensembles, orchestras, vocal groups, to see exhibitions of small and large producers. This is also a chance to meet with businessmen and representatives of the local administration.

- *Balkan Amateur Chess Festival*. Since 2010, chess club "Nayden Voynov" - Vidin, in partnership with hotels and guest houses from the town of Belogradchik and with the support of the Municipality, has been organizing every year this sports event that collects 100-150 participants and accompanying persons within one week.

In the last few years, two new events were launched in the Municipality. They considerably diversified the event life and quickly turned into an attraction and a motive to take a trip to the area:
- Summer Festival “Opera of the Peaks - Belogradchik Rocks”. It is held annually at the end of July and the beginning of August. It is an initiative of the Sofia Opera and Ballet and the Belogradchik Municipality. The performances are held in the fortress and the Magura cave.

- Biking rally "ROCKS 'N ROLL". It is held in May in four categories - Hobby, Elite, Youth and Women. The idea of the project is to promote safe biking among adolescents and to launch environmentally friendly initiatives;

Another group of events, currently of local importance, also have the potential to attract tourists and/or diversify their stay through the development of attractions and participation in traditional activities:

- Folk gaiety on the occasion of the Day of the Vine-Grower
- Visit of inland water basins for the purpose of counting and taking photos of water birds,
- Celebration of St. Todor's Day and the organization of horse racing,
- Opening of the new tourist season - in the middle of April,
- Concert and eco-art on the occasion of the Earth Day,
- Organization and conduct of the annual Festival days dedicated to Professor Georgi Dimitrov,
- Celebration of the patron saint's day of the church "St. George” in the town of Belogradchik - "Gergjovden",
- The Day of the forest and the tourism in the Stakevtsi Balkan,
- Celebration of the anniversary of the Belogradchik Uprising of 1850.

In addition, the cultural calendar of the municipality also includes celebrations of national, traditional and religious holidays.

3.1.2. Current state of tourism in the municipality

3.1.2.1. Places to stay

The total number of lodging places\(^1\) in Belogradchik Municipality is 31, with a total capacity for accommodation of 468 persons.

\(^1\) Research conducted on the territory of Belogradchik Municipality, Bulgaria, and Knjaževac Municipality, Serbia; "Authentic Bulgaria";
In the *territorial aspect*, most of them are concentrated in the town of Belogradchik - a total of 18 places with capacity for the accommodation of 271 persons. The other places are spread across a large number of settlements which facilitates the formation and the supply of products belonging to the specialized forms of tourism (small groups, moving from place to place, direct contact with the hosts, etc.)

- The village of Rabisha has 3 lodging places with a total capacity of 62 beds,
- The village of Falkovets[^2] has one lodging place with capacity for 50 persons,
- The village of Izvos/village of Chiflitsi has 4 lodging places with a total capacity of 38 beds
- The village of Stakevtsi has 3 guest houses with a total of 30 beds.
- The village of Dabravka and the village of Granitovo each have one guest house with 8-9 beds.

[^2]: The village of Falkovets is located in Dimovo Municipality, but due to its immediate proximity to Belogradchik Municipality and its location on the road from Belogradchik to Sofia, for the needs of this study we will count it towards Belogradchik Municipality.
The type diversity of the lodging places is greater, as there are hotels, family hotels, guest houses, rooms for guests, hostels, villas. There are two camping sites on the territory of the Municipality - in the village of Falkovets and near the village of Rabisha.

The category structure of the accommodation places is dominated by places of lower category (1-2 stars), while in the high category class there is only one place - the 4-star Skalite Hotel. This is somewhat logical, considering the type structure, and in general does restrict the development of adventure tourism. At the same time, increasing the share of high category accommodation (currently around 17% of the beds) would allow the attraction of more demanding and high-income tourists.

The total bed capacity of the municipality can be assessed as insufficient, as in the periods of higher demand (national holidays, "Opera on the Rocks") it runs out completely and tourists are forced to stay in neighbouring municipalities. In respect of the bed capacity, lodging places can be classified as follows:

- lodging places with 50 to 100 beds - 1 with a total of 81 beds;
- lodging places with 11 to 50 beds - 14 with a total of 265 beds;
- lodging places with 10 to 50 beds - 18 with a total of 142 beds.

In respect of the additional services offered by lodging places to their guests, it makes an impression that a large part of the hotels and guest houses offer opportunities for many activities that use mainly the natural richness of the Belogradchik Rocks phenomenon. These are: safari, trip with buggy, jeep, ATV, mountain biking, hiking, horseback riding tours, survival in the wild nature. At the same time, some hotel keepers offer different attractions and services such as paintball, cave tourism, wine tourism, hunting and fishing, spa and wellness services, picking of herbs and mushrooms, archery, training and renting of kite and wind surfing, etc.

3.1.2.2. Visitor infrastructure, attractions and services

There is a tourist information centre functioning on the territory of Belogradchik which is supported by the Municipality and provides information on tourism both in the region and in neighbouring destinations. For several years, the Municipality has also been maintaining an
auto train which offers an attractive trip from the central square of Belogradchik to the Belogradchik Fortress.

The Skala Biking Club is the main drive for development of mountain biking and biking tourism in the Municipality. The club is the main organizer of the biking rally "ROCKS 'N ROLL", and it also organizes the initiative "Ride a bike" every weekend as a regular service - biking tours with different level of difficulty and length, open to all who wish to participate. Along with its initiatives, the club is also entrusted with the marking and maintenance of the mountain biking routes in the area.

Apart from biking, there are also hiking eco routes marked in the Municipality (5 pcs) leading tourists to the most interesting sites and places with panoramic views, as they have been naturally developed around the main attraction - the Belogradchik Rocks.

A characteristic element of the tourist offers in the region are the wineries and the services and attractions offered by them. For example, in the winery of Borovitsa, its managers offer an exclusively competent lecture, a selection of quality wines, among which unique varieties such as orange wine, champagne, etc. and observation of the production process.

On its part, the Magura Winery offers wine tasting in one of the halls of the Magura Cave which has been artificially separated for the ageing of sparkling wines, which is in itself a tourist attraction and experience.

An important location is also the Rabisha Lake where a different set of attractions and additional services are offered - water attractions (*renting of fishing rod; renting of wind surf; renting of kite surf; renting of two-seated tourist kayak*), a trip with a jeep around the lake, archery; tasting of wines from the region of Vidin, etc. The latest novelty offered since the winter season 2017/18 is the balloon flight above the frozen waters of the lake, offered by the Regional Development Agency and Business Centre in Vidin;

On the other side, the offering of additional services in the village of Stakevtsi includes wildlife photography and photo tourism, 4x4 safari, horseback riding, buggy trip, etc.
3.1.2.3. Tourist flow

The tourist flow to Belogradchik has been continuously growing in the recent years and especially after 2011 (the New 7 Wonders of the World campaign and Belogradchik’s nomination). For 2017 only, 20,327 overnight stays have been recorded in the Municipality which is an increase of 62% compared to 2016. This "boom" is due, above all, to the local market - the share of overnight stays realized by the Bulgarians constitutes 88% of all overnight stays. The absolute number of overnight stays of Bulgarians is 17,798 or with 70% more than in 2016. There is also an increase in the number of foreign guests - the number of overnight stays realized by them rose by 21% to reach 2,529 nights.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>month/year</th>
<th>total overnight stays</th>
<th>Bulgarians</th>
<th>Foreigners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>12,536</td>
<td>10,452</td>
<td>2,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>20,327</td>
<td>17,798</td>
<td>2,529</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the significant increase in the number of overnight stays, the average rate of employment in the accommodation places in the municipality remains at critical low levels, making up only 12% in 2017 (with 468 beds and 170,820 overnight stays in exploitation).

Interesting trends are also contained in the statistics on the visits of museum sites in the Municipality. For 2017, the total number of visits to the 5 sites reviewed is 107,785, retaining the 2016 level (107,345). On the one hand, the significant excess in relation to the realized overnight stays suggests a high share of daily visitors (incl. cruise tourists; tourists from neighbouring destinations, e.g. Vidin). On the other hand, the large growth of overnight stays in relation to the present level of museum visitors could be interpreted as a sign for change of the ratio of daily visitors/tourists in favour of the tourists. In other words, an increasingly large part of visitors prefer to spend the night at the destination.
## BREAKDOWN
of visitors by months, nationality and tourist sites on the territory of Belogradchik Municipality, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>month</th>
<th>nationality</th>
<th>Belogradchik Fortress</th>
<th>Magura Cave</th>
<th>Historical Museum</th>
<th>Museum of Natural History</th>
<th>Art Gallery</th>
<th>for the month</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>262</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>602</td>
<td>705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>2,897</td>
<td>1,305</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,290</td>
<td>4,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>167</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>557</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>7,388</td>
<td>3,603</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11,377</td>
<td>14,354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>2,347</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2,977</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>5,521</td>
<td>2,939</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>8,842</td>
<td>10,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>1,699</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,960</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>7,928</td>
<td>3,224</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11,390</td>
<td>14,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>2,210</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,729</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>6,355</td>
<td>3,251</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>9,847</td>
<td>13,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>3,250</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,832</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>9,051</td>
<td>5,180</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14,460</td>
<td>18,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>3,415</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>4,212</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>8,295</td>
<td>4,781</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13,379</td>
<td>17,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>3,335</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,971</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>4,249</td>
<td>1,850</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6,181</td>
<td>8,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>1,607</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,822</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>1,338</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2,341</td>
<td>2,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>126</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>584</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>1,768</td>
<td>2,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total in 2017</strong></td>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>54,810</td>
<td>27,733</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>1,333</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>84,739</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>19,034</td>
<td>3,915</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23,046</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>73,844</strong></td>
<td><strong>31,648</strong></td>
<td><strong>404</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,408</strong></td>
<td><strong>481</strong></td>
<td><strong>107,785</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In respect of products, the Municipality is mostly visited for educational tourism motivated mainly by the leading tourist sites - the Belogradchik Rocks, the Belogradchik Fortress and the Magura Cave. This also determines the main generating markets and market segments at present - internal market (weekend visits, sightseeing groups) and passengers of cruise ships along the Danube river.

Over the past 5-7 years, the Municipality has been undergoing a positive development in terms of diversification of the tourist product. On the basis of the said sites, through the building of the relevant infrastructure (marked trails), specialized types of tourism are being offered - mountain biking, hiking, ecotourism. Event tourism has also registered serious growth mostly thanks to the organization of the “Opera on the Rocks” and the biking rally "Rocks'n Roll". In addition, Belogradchik is turning into a destination for enological and culinary tourism (with the active participation of local wineries) and rural tourism (village of Falkovets, village of Stakevtsi).

It is important to note that Belogradchik is part of the transnational Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route, and that it there is possibility to promote the destination and to generate demand for the specialized types of tourism.

3.2. Chuprene Municipality

3.2.1. Main tourist resources

3.2.1.1. Natural resources

The following protected territories are situated on the territory of Chuprene Municipality:

- **Chuprene Reserve** which was included in the list of biosphere reserves in 1977 under the UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere Programme;

- protected areas - **Midzhur**, located on the land of the village of Gorni Lom and accessible through an eco path from the village of Gorni Lom and **Chuprenski buki**;

- **natural landmark Left and Right Suhi Pech Caves.** Located on the land of the village of Dolni Lom, with a total area of 0.2 ha. It is characterized by numerous formations such as
marmites, sinter lakes, cave karren, bat colonies. Right Suhi Pech is situated about 2 km away from the village in the southeast direction, on the Chukata hill. The cave is accessible for visitors without special equipment. It has been probably used by the prehistoric man. Traces of a cave bear have been found. In the Left Suhi Pech cave, coins and ceramics from the Antiquity have been found.

- **Natural landmark “Gardata”:** it is located on the land of the village of Protopopintsi and covers part of the river bed of the Chuprenska river. Degree of accessibility: immediate proximity to road III-114 in the area of the village of Protopopintsi;

- **Natural landmark ”Belogradchick Rocks” – part. (see above)**

**Ecological Network Natura 2000**

According to the Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora and the Directive on the conservation of wild birds, there are two protected zones on the territory of Chuprene Municipality.

- The protected zone “Western Balkan Mountain and the Fore-Balkan” is the largest in area and the most significant for the district in terms of biodiversity. It was declared a protected zone under Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive), code BG0001040. The zone has a total area of 219 7158,480 decares and covers parts of the territory of the districts of Vidin, Montana and Sofia. Within the limits of Vidin District, the protected zone fully covers the territory of Chuprene Municipality.

- The protected zone “Western Balkan” was declared as such under Directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds, code BG002002, with a total area of 1468204,800 decares, with the aim of preserving several dents of bird species included in the Red Book of Bulgaria, as well as such that are of importance for the European Union. Over 60 bird species can be encountered in the protected zone, 31 of which are included in the Red Book. Twenty-two bird species are of European importance. In this protected zone, one can observe black and white stork, common kestrel, hazel grouse, night birds, several types of eagles, falcons, woodpeckers and many others.
**Biodiversity**

**Flora.** The diversity of the relief and the weather conditions in the area are the reason for the formation of an exceptional variety of plant communities. The region’s flora includes about 1,000 species, over 60 of them being rare and endangered by extinction. Here, on a relatively small territory, one can see almost all the kinds of habitats that are typical for Bulgaria. At the same time, in some places unique conditions have formed for the emergence of the so called endemic species. Such Bulgarian endemic species are: Sempervivum erythraeum, Campanula jordanovii, butterfly orchid (Orchis papilionacea), Sedum stefco. Among the most interesting Balkan endemic species are: Simphyandra wanery, Siberian melic grass (Melica altissima) and the tertiary relict - Ramonda serbica.

**Fauna.** There are around 180 species of birds, 53 species of mammals (of which 14 species of bats), 11 species of amphibians and 15 species of reptiles in the region.

**Birds** are the best represented group of vertebrates. There are also species which are globally endangered. Such are the lesser kestrel (Falco naumani) and the corncrake (Crex crex). A large part of the bird species are of European importance - black stork (Ciconia nigra), red kite (Milvus milvus), hen harrier (Circus cyaneus), hunting falcon (Falco herug), owl (Bubo bubo), barn owl (Tyto alba), etc. This great diversity of birds is due to the fact that one of the main migration routes of birds in Europe passes here – “Via Aristotelis”, as well as to the exceptional variety of habitats.

**Mammals** are another large group of animals which is distinguished for its abundance. Among the species included in the Red Book of Bulgaria are the otter (Lutra lutra), European pine marten (Martes martes), wolf (Canis lupus), as well as all types of bats. The otter and the lesser mole-rat (Spalax leucodon) are also included in the World’s Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in the category of "vulnerable species". In the past, the forests of the area were inhabited by the largest European cat - lynx (Felis lynx). This mammal, which disappeared more than 50 years ago, settled down again in the border region of the Western Balkan Mountain. This assertion is based on the existence of a lynx population expanding its habitat towards the neighbouring Serbian territory, as well as the frequent cases of lynx observation in the Municipality, in regions bordering the biosphere.
reserve. The qualitative indigenous habitats with rich nutritional reserve, extremely limited human presence on considerable border territories, and the conservation functions of Chuprene biosphere reserve are all preconditions which have led to the emergence of the brown bear whose population is slowly growing.

The diversity of fish species is not great as there are no large high-water rivers and other natural water basins in the region. The upper streams of rivers taking their source from here are clean and are inhabited by Balkan trout. There are also fish species known to all fishermen, such as the Balkan barbel, chub, Danube bleak, etc. Typical inhabitants of dams are the common carp, perch, roach, silver and big head carp, sheatfish.

The Hermann’s tortoise (Testudo hermanni) which inhabits the area is included in the IUCN's World Red List. Out of the 16 snake species identified in the country, seven can be seen in the region, among which are the two venomous snakes - common European viper (Vipera beros) and horned viper (Vipera amodytes).

### 3.2.1.2. Anthropogenic resources

In each settlement on the territory of the Municipality, there are churches which have been declared monuments of culture. In three of the settlements, they fall within the category of National Importance:

- **The St. Nicholas Church, village of Targovishte** - an architectural and artistic monument of culture - State Gazette no. 39 of 1973. The temple was built in 1870-1872 in an independent property located in the historical centre of the village. The building is completely built of stone as a three-nave basilica. The thickness of the walls is 120-130 cm. The foundations of the building end with a very well-shaped stone plinth. In terms of construction and dimensions, it is equitable to the church of the Lopushanski Monastery. Both have been defined as the largest three-nave churches in the Northwestern region.

- **The church of St. Paraskeva, village of Gorni Lom** - the oldest single-nave church in the region. It was built in the 14th century. The church was declared a monument of culture of national importance.
• The church of St. John the Baptist, village of Varbovo. It was built in 1652. An artistic monument of culture of national importance.

The remaining five churches are monuments of culture of local importance and were declared as follows:

• The Holy Trinity Church, village of Dolni Lom - an artistic monument of culture since 1973. It was built in 1854. The main material is rubble.
• The Holy Ascension Church, village of Protopopintsi - an artistic monument of culture since 1973. It was built in the 17th century.
• The Holy Ascension Church, village of Sredogriv. It was built in 1890 by the Master Seraphim Yosifov and the Master Evtim Sarbenov from Macedonia. It was painted by Avram Dicho who was born in the village of Tresanche and is a representative of the Debar school.
• The St. Nicholas Church, village of Chuprene - an artistic monument of culture since 1973. It was built in 1847.
• The Church of St. George the Great Martyr, village of Replyana - an artistic monument of culture since 1973. It was built in 1882.

Unique in its construction and architecture is the clock tower in the village of Chuprene. The tower was built in 1899 by Macedonian masters. The tower is 15 meters high and is built of ashlar limestone blocks. In the middle of the 1930s /ca. 1927-1928/, a clock movement with four dials was mounted and it is still working today.

• The house museum of Asen Balkanski, village of Chuprene. The house museum also houses an ethnographic collection with objects from the daily life and labour of the local people.

The ethnographic collections in the villages of Gorni Lom and Dolni Lom contain characteristic costumes and garments of the local population. The collection also contains tools used in the manufacture of garments, food products, etc. Here one can also see objects and devices used in the daily life of our ancestors.

The House of Crafts, village of Gorni Lom. The house displays crafts from the past of the village of Gorni Lom.
A cultural calendar of the Municipality is prepared annually with the aim of promoting the international, national, regional and local events. The most important of them are:

*Turlashki Folklore Fair "Kada kum prase i ti vrechu"*. This is probably the most large-scale and entertaining cultural event in the Municipality. The proverb after which the festival was named is translated as follows: “When the best man brings a pig, you should bring a bag,” i.e. when fate presents you with something, you should be ready to take it immediately because if you wait, you may miss the moment and regret about it. The main objective of this event is to keep, conserve and pass the traditions of the Turlashki folklore to the young. The fair does not have a competitive character. Each year, amateur performers from the "entire Northwestern region, as well as groups from Sofia, Zlatitsa and other towns of the country take part in the festivities. In the past few years, amateur performers from the Republic of Serbia have also been taking part - bands from Knjaževac and Beli Izvor. In addition to the beautiful performances of talented participants, tasting of local dishes and a fashion show of traditional male and female costumes is held in Chuprene. The event is also attended by local craftsmen - potters, woodcarvers, chefs who display and offer beautiful folk souvenirs the whole day.

*GORNOLOMSKI BALKAN FEST*. Each year, groups of around 80-100 people take part in the traditional climbing of Midzhur Peak. The climbing is organized by Chuprene Municipality and the Belogradchik Rocks Tourist Association. It is included in the national calendar of the Bulgarian Tourist Union, so lovers of the mountains from Shumen, Vratsa, Lom, Pazardzhik, Sofia, as well as the Kremikovtsi Hiking Tourism Club also take part in it. The traditional climbing of Midzhur Peak was launched in 2004. Midzhur Peak is 2,168 m high and is the highest peak in the Western Balkan Mountains along the border with the Republic of Serbia. The longest and the hardest eco path leads to it. The starting point is located 800 m away in the Dzhurdzhin Krash area of the Gornolomski Balkan Mountain and it takes a 4-hour walk to reach the peak. Everyone who succeeds in climbing the peak is awarded a diploma.

More than 500 people gather annually at *Chuprene Northwestern Hunting Fair*. The event is organized by Chuprene Municipality, Midzhur Association of Hunters and Fishermen, and the National Union of Hunters and Fishermen. After the official opening, an exhibition of
dogs is held in two rounds. The invited weapon shops demonstrate disassembling and assembling of a hunting gun, for which awards are also granted. The afternoon continues with a music programme and hunting sketches. The feast goes on with music and dances until late in the evening when coloured fireworks are set off.

### 3.2.2. Current state of tourism in the municipality

#### 3.2.2.1. Places to stay

Of the three municipalities in the region, Chuprene Municipality offers least opportunities for accommodation. The total capacity is 93 beds, distributed in 7 lodging places:

1. **Gorski Rai Hut**. Situated at an altitude of 1,450 m above sea level. It is located in the Chuprenski Balkan Mountain, at an immediate proximity to Chuprene biosphere reserve. It has 38 beds.

2. **Midzhur Hut**. It is located in the Gornolomski Balkan Mountain, right next to the starting point for the climbing of Midzhur Peak. It has 8 beds.

3. **Tourist Dormitory, village of Chuprene**. It is situated in the centre of the village of Chuprene. It disposes with a modern equipment with 15 beds for overnight stay.

4. **Hunter House**. It is situated in the Bela voda area in the Chuprenski Balkan Mountain and is the property of the Midzhur Department of State Forestry. It has 15 beds and offers excellent conditions for the lovers of hunting tourism.

5. Guest houses:
   - village of Sredogriv - 1 guest house with a total of 6 beds.
   - village of Gorni Lom - 2 guest houses with a total of 12 beds.

In structural respect, what makes an impression is the absence of hotel facilities as the supply is realized entirely in parahotel facilities. The resulting quality and diversity of services offered limits the opportunities for providing service to the more demanding guests.

Considering the type and the individual capacity of the lodging places, they can be assessed as suitable for adventure tourism in so far as it implies individual tourists and/or small groups, and direct contact with the owner.

The territorial distribution is also favourable as lodging places are not concentrated in one place but are scattered throughout the municipality, close to the main tourist sites.
3.2.3.2. Visitor infrastructure, attractions and services

There is a tourist visitor centre set up in the village of Chuprene as a branch of the centre which functions in the village of Gorni Lom.

In the Municipality, there is a network of 10 eco paths of different length and hardness. Four of them pass through the hill karst formations called "Glamas", also covering the villages of Varbovo, Targovishte and Replyana, while five of the paths reach Gorski Rai Hut, right next to Chuprene Reserve. One of the paths passes through the reserve itself.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ROUTE</th>
<th>LENGTH OF WALKING TRAIL IN KM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MARTINOV KAMAK</td>
<td>s. Chuprene – Manastirka – Kray na asfalta – Funiya area – Vedernik Peak</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEKINSKA SHOBARKA</td>
<td>s. Chuprene – Manastirka – Minna padina</td>
<td>4</td>
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**Map Diagram:**

1. **MARTINOV KAMAK**
   - Chuprene – Manastirka – End of the asphalt – Funiya area – Vedernik Peak
   - Length: 3.5 km
2. **BEKINSKA SHOBARKA**
   - Chuprene – Manastirka – Minna padina
   - Length: 4 km
The Western Balkan tourist route also passes through the Municipality, starting from the Kom Peak and reaching the town of Belogradchik which is also a continuation of the Kom-Emine national route.

In recent years, on the basis of individual traditional or agricultural industries, attempts have been made to develop additional services and attractions, e.g. visit to the ostrich farm (village of Protopopintsi), watching the weaving of rugs and fleecy rugs (village of Gorni Lom), etc.

3.3. Knjaževac Municipality

3.3.1. Main tourist resources

3.3.1.1. Natural resources

*Balkan Mountain National Park*
Part of the Balkan Mountain range is situated on the territory of Knjaževac Municipality. The mountainous region was declared a national park in 1997 because of the exceptional diversity of plant and animal species. The park covers a territory of 142,219.64 ha. In the Balkan Mountain, there are 1,195 species of higher plants, 51 species of mosses which, at national level, makes up 34% of the total fund of Serbia. Here one can observe tertiary and endemic plant species typical for gorges, while in the highest parts of the mountain one can find glacial relicts and endemic species. There are 147 animal species and 40 plants which were declared protected on the territory of Serbia. Several strict reserves protect important species:

- "Draganishte" - spruce forests reserve
- "Golyamata reka" - beech rainforests
- "Vražja glava" - mountain maple
- "Smrče" - the best conserved and most beautiful spruce forests of the Balkan Mountain and in Serbia as a whole, with typical peat and sphagnum.
- "Kopren"

*The fauna* in the Balkan Mountain region consists of 116 butterfly species (22 newly found and 6 glacial relicts), 18 species of the herpetofauna (6 amphibian and 12 reptile species), while the ichthyofauna is represented by 26 species.

The greatest variety of birds in Serbia, Former Yugoslavia and the greater part of the Balkans can be found here, in the Balkan Mountain, where about 203 species can be observed. The Balkan Mountain is included in the register of the territories of international importance for the European birds - IBA - with an area of 44,000 ha. The fauna of the mammals is represented by 30 species.

*Tupižnica* is a low limestone mountain, its highest peak reaching 1,170 m, located 15 km away from Knjaževac. Each year, the Republican mountain initiative "Days of the Lilac" is held in Tupižnica. Since it is a limestone mountain, there are characteristic relief karst forms here, one of the most famous caves here is the Ledenika Cave, as well as Davidova propast (some hundred meters deep). Tupižnica has the potential for hunting tourism and extreme sports: paragliding, mountain climbing, mountain biking. Because of the conditions and the terrain, international paragliding competitions have been held here since 2010.
On the territory of Knjaževac Municipality there is also the mineral spring Rgoška banja. The water is subthermal, its temperature varying between 20 and 37 degrees. Its chemical composition makes it suitable for treatment of the pulmonary tract, rheumatism, sciatica, some neurological diseases, etc.

3.3.1.2. Anthropogenic resources

The Homeland Museum of Knjaževac is situated in a building which is a monument of culture. It was built as the dwelling place of the Sibinovic Family, former owners of a mine, in 1906. The permanent exhibition of the museum consists of archaeological, ethnological, historical, artistic and geological-natural exhibits from the prehistoric times to the present day. Among the most important and significant exhibits are those discovered in the archaeological site Timacum Minus.

The Town Museum in Knjaževac is situated in the house in which the leader of the Radical Party, Aca Stanojevic, once lived. The house was built in the period 1903-1912, at the time when he was Chairman of the National Assembly. The architecture of the house is similar to that of an Italian villa from that period. It was declared a monument of culture in 1983. Numerous original objects found in the house, archive documents and personal belongings of Aca Stanojevic, as well as items received as gifts from old families or individuals of Knjaževac, form a modest yet significant museum fund. The lower floor is used for various "non-museum" activities. Part of it is used as a gallery and a wedding hall, for literary and cultural evenings, ceremonial signing of contracts between companies, as well as for various lectures or scientific conferences, which makes it a frequently visited place and an integral part of the town’s life.

Timacum Minus, Roman fortification 1st-6th century

The oldest military fortification in the region of the Timok river called Timacum Minus (in Latin: Timacum - Timok, minus - smaller) has been built in the valley of the Beli Timok river in proximity to the village of Ravna, not far away from Knjaževac. The archaeological research of this place show continuity in the residence from the Middle Ages to the prehistory. This settlement reached its apogee in ancient times when Timacum Minus was a significant mining centre.
Timacum Minus is located on the crossing spot of the roads leading to the Danube river, the region of Morava, the Adriatic Sea and the Aegean Sea. It is situated in the fertile valley of the Beli Timok river, in proximity to the fertile parts of the Balkan Mountain. Its location has been creating favourable conditions for development throughout the ancient period. The numerous ores (gold, silver, copper, lead and iron) of the Balkan Mountain determine the urban economy of Timacum Minus. The epigraphic inscriptions confirm that it was an important administrative centre of a wider area. It was destroyed several times during Barbarian invasions in the middle of the 3rd until the middle of the 5th century.

**Gurgusovačka Tower**

On a river terrace above the building of the municipal assembly in Knjaževac is situated the Gurgusovačka Tower (from Gurgusovac - the old name of Knjaževac) - a quadrangular base with a height of approximately 13 m, surrounded by stone wall. On this place, at the end of the 18th century, the Turks built a fortress, surrounded by a palisade and protected with a deep ditch, in which there has been a garrison of 100 people. The tower is also known as the Serbian Bastille because the political prisoners used to be held here.

**Archeo-Ethno Park in the village of Ravna**

The Archeo-Ethnographic Park is situated in the village of Ravna, 8 km north of Knjaževac, in the yard of the old village school. The oldest houses in the village were built at the beginning of the 20th century along with the building of the school in 1906. Today, it is a historical monument. The choice of this village for the positioning of the Archaeo-Ethno Park was influenced by the proximity of the ancient fortress Timacum Minus. The construction of the park began in 1977 and it was officially opened in 1989.

The main idea is to exhibit considerable archaeological finds from Timacum Minus within the framework of the archaeological exhibition in the school building and the lipidarium, as well as to make visitors acquainted with the history of the archaeological research of the nearby site. One of the main ideas was to illustrate the ambient of the 19th-century patriarchal community, parts of which are the residential and commercial buildings. The Ethnographic Park consists of the house from Gornja Kamenica, with a Wine Museum with winery in its basement, a house from Berčinovac, a barn form Beli Potok and a rakia cauldron with a cherry-wood tube from Pričevac.
Over the past ten years, the park has been supplemented by another site, built on the model of the Gazdíc house from Radicevac in the Balkan Mountain in which, besides the smaller hall for conferences and tasting of traditional food, wines and brandy from the area of Knjaževac, there is a tourist information centre with a souvenir shop. In the park there is also a workshop for the production of traditional ceramics with replicas of ancient and traditional pottery kilns. A laboratory for conservation was set up and equipped in the old village school. In addition to the various educational and creative programs and the organization of seminars, the Park offers the opportunity for accommodation and organization of various conferences and cultural, tourist and educational programmes, as well as scientific and research camps.

**The Wine Museum**

In the basement of the "Big House" in the park, there is an exhibition space which is devoted to the wine production in this region. Here are displayed tools used for production and storage of wine (vessels, measuring cylinders, tools for processing of grapes and preparation of the wine, wine cellar storing wines from the region of Knjaževac, etc.) and photographic documents about the old tradition of wine production in the region.

**Centre for the production of traditional ceramics and conservation of traditional crafts**

In the Archeo-Ethno Park in the village of Ravna there is a workshop for traditional ceramics - equipped with funds of the UNICEF, the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia and Knjaževac Municipality in order to conserve and promote the traditional ceramics in the region of Knjaževac. Summer schools for traditional crafts are organized here for young people, students, artists and museum experts. In addition to working space and traditional equipment and tools for the production of ceramics, there is also a replica of old kilns for ceramics made in partnership with the archaeologists and the traditional craftsmen from Spain as part of a project backed by the Spanish Cultural Centre Cervantes in Serbia, Granada and the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia. In immediate proximity to the replica of the old kiln, there is a traditional kiln for ceramics used in the region of Knjaževac. The working space is complemented by modern equipment and instruments, as well as a small exhibition space with objects made during the summer schools. Souvenirs made of twin-thread wool are produced in the Archeo-Ethno Park in Ravna.

**Church of Saint George**
The construction of the church dedicated to Saint George started in 1833. It was finished in 1835, and the clock tower was built in 1866. Of particular importance were the iconostasis, the bells and the gospel. During the Serbian-Turkish war of 1876, Knjaževac was completely burnt down and the church was destroyed. It was restored in 1878 and the new iconostasis was made by the artist Nikola Marinkovic. The Gospel from 1805, the silver cross from 1866, two icons and the remains of the old iconostasis from 1835 are stored in the treasure house of the Knjaževac Church.

The Old Bazaar
The most beautiful part of Knjaževac is its urban nucleus - "The Old Bazaar" - the colourful facades of the commercial and craft shops, a tavern and a summer garden, incorporated in the modern life and protected as cultural and historical heritage.

Dzervin Villa
On the Dzervin Brdo hill, above the town, Dzervin Villa was erected on the model of a villa in Karlovy Vary, the Czech Republic. It was built by the famous café and hotel keeper Djordje Cvetkovic. He was the owner of the famous Belgrade café “Kolarak”, a great war hero and one of the pioneers of the Serbian cinema. The de-luxe building with ground floor, two floors and an alcove is furnished with the most luxury furniture, part of which have been delivered from the Czech Republic. The building is surrounded by a three-meter high decorative wall, and the vineyard around the villa is also popular.

The Bridges of Knjaževac
Knjaževac is often called Mala Venice because of the urban nucleus - the Old Bazaar and the seven bridges that cross the rivers. The most famous bridge in Knjaževac is the "stone bridge" designed by Eng. Borivoy Radenovic in 1913. At the time when it was built, it was the biggest bridge of reinforced concrete in Serbia. The "wooden bridge" or the "bridge of love" which has witnessed many love stories is also interesting.

The "Holy Virgin" Church is situated in the village of Dolna Kamenica, 15 km south-east of Knjaževac. It was built by an unknown nobleman in the 14th century. This church is the most original and the most valuable art monument of the Timok Eparchy.

The Holy Trinity Monastery
The Holy Trinity Monastery is located between Gornja and Donja Kamenica, in the valley of Tgoviski Timok, 17 km away from Knjaževac. It was founded by the Serbian despot Lazar, the smallest son of Djordje Brankovic, as is recorded in the legend of 1454. The church is modest in size and was built in the Serbian-Moravian style. Although modestly built, it is completely painted. The murals were destroyed in the middle of the 20th century and only traces of them can be seen today.

Hieromonk Pantaleimon Nedelkovic was the first known abbot of the monastery which was built in 1836. At the time of his management, the church estates were organized and the monastery library was furnished with books which are still used today. Today, nuns live in the monastery who are engaged in the making of icons and other items connected with the Orthodox faith.

Cultural Calendar

Festival of Serbian Youth Culture (FKMS) is a traditional multicultural republican festival which has been held since 1962 in Knjaževac. The festival includes works in the field of music (light, folk, classics), choir singing, literature, recitation, drama, cinema, folklore, contemporary dances, ballet, art photography, youth caricatures, comics and videos. The participants in the festival are young people, highest-level amateurs or such that strive for achievements in the field of culture and art. The festival is well known and recognized in the cultural public domain of the Republic of Serbia.

Pandzur Fair
The fair is organized near Kalna, in the village of Zalovik Izvor, at the foot of the Balkan Mountain, on August 28th - the Assumption of Mary. Original folklore music is performed. For many years, the Pandzur Fair has been gathering a large number of fans of old authentic and forgotten melodies.

Gergjovden Fair - A Prayer under Midzur
The traditional event "Gergjovden Fair - A Prayer under Midzur" is held on the slopes of the Balkan Mountain in two villages - Budzak and Vrotovac, on May 6th, Gergjovden (St. George's Day), and several days later it is also held in Balta Berilovac. In ancient times, shepherds used to believe that the patrons of their herd would deliberately gather and disperse
the clouds over the Balkan Mountain. To win their good graces, the shepherds would select the best lamb, decorate it with spring wreath, and sacrifice it on the stone altar. The lamb would be cooked in a cauldron and blessed offering would be distributed among local residents.

In present days, the event is a suitable cultural and artistic programme in which the participants perform original songs and dances. The most beautiful shepherd dog is chosen, and what attracts tourists the most is the competition for preparation of local dishes. The most famous dishes are “Budzak are klinka” - a type of soup prepared from sour cabbage, soup of "Vocci" (raisins), meatless dry peppers stuffed with leeks, Bel muz, etc. Shepherd games are organized on the meadows above the school settlement with the participation of local residents from the neighbouring villages.

International Fair at the Kadiboaz Pass

(see page.....)

**BALKAN MOUNTAIN CHALLENGE**

Together with the Cycling Federation of Serbia, Novi Sad Cycling Club, and under the patronage of the Public Company for the Development of Mountain Tourism Stara Planina, a mountain biking competition takes place at Babin zab in the Balkan Mountain in July or August.

**BALKAN MOUNTAIN ULTRA TRAIL**

“Balkan Mountain Ultra Trail” is an event organized by the Tourist Organization of Knjaževac Municipality since 2014, in cooperation with sports clubs that support extreme sports in nature.

The competition involves 3 tracks: 19 km, 86 km and 122 km. It is international and gathers a large number of competitors from the country, as well as from the region and beyond, and due to the configuration of the terrain and the profile of the track is considered one of the most difficult in this part of the Balkans.

**Cuisine and wine**
Knjaževac Municipality enjoys great natural wealth and preserved traditions. Pure natural environment and fertile land create a healthy basis for traditional, organic kitchen and quality wines.

The cuisine of Knjaževac is a blend of tastes. The recipes have been preserved for centuries, and the local people are hospitable and take good care for their guests. Knjaževac is famous for the exceptional cheeses and quality rakia. Some recipes are extremely delicious and cannot be tasted elsewhere. Food is flavoured with exceptional local wines and often, in restaurants, with authentic local live music.

Vine growing and wine producing in Knjaževac date back from Roman times which is evidenced by data available in the archaeological site Timacum Minus located right next to Knjaževac. A statue of Dionysus, the God of wine, has been found here. In the archives of the ancient authors from the 3rd and 4th century, the region of today’s Knjaževac is described as vines.

The oldest vines in this region are located on the Dzervin hill above Knjaževac. The natural conditions of Knjaževac and its surroundings have been making this region extremely suitable for vine-growing for many years. Today, the wine in Knjaževac is an integral part of the history and tradition of this district. Red varieties of grape are cultivated here.

### 3.3.2. Current state of tourism in the municipality

#### 3.3.2.1. Places to stay

The lodging places in Knjaževac Municipality total 41, with 1,190 beds. In the town of Knjaževac there are only 5 lodging places with a total capacity of 249 beds.

Most beds in the municipality are concentrated at the foot of the Babin Zub peak where there is a ski track and a large spa hotel with 380 beds - Hotel Stara Planina Falkensteiner. In addition, in the area located between the main road Knjaževac - Pirot and the ski tracks, there are another 22 lodging places with a total capacity of 397 beds; in other words, the region

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3 Research conducted on the territory of Belogradchik Municipality, Bulgaria, and Knjaževac Municipality, Serbia
known under the brand "Stara Planina" has 777 beds available. Typical for this part of Serbia are active processes of construction and the increasing bed capacity which has been observed for several years.

Typical for the region of the Balkan Mountain is that nearly half of the tourists are Bulgarians. In 2014, 30% of the customers who stayed in the big spa hotel came from Bulgaria, while in one of the fast-growing complexes "Sarna" near the village of Kalna, the Bulgarian guests made up about 90%.

In respect of the bed capacity in Knjaževac Municipality, it can be broken down as follows:

- lodging places with over 100 beds - 1 with a total of 380 beds;
- lodging places with 50 to 100 beds - 5 with a total of 339 beds;
- lodging places with 11 to 50 beds - 13 with a total of 264 beds;
- lodging places with 10 to 50 beds - 21 with a total of 147 beds.
3.3.2.2. Visitor infrastructure

Ski Centre "Stara planina" each year attracts new visitors and is becoming a more appealing destination for the lovers of winter sports.

Ski Resort "Babin Zub" disposes with about 13 km of ski tracks, 2 drag lifts, 2 ski lifts and the first cabin lift in Serbia. "Jabučko ravniště" is the first gondola lift in Serbia. It has cabins with a capacity of eight people and carries skiers to the more remote system of ski lifts and trails. The four-seat ropeway "Konjarnik" has a conveyor belt for skiers with a capacity of 1,400 skiers per hour, and an anchor-type ski lift "Slanceva dolina" - with a capacity of 1,200 skiers per hour.

For the fans of extreme sports, there are also freeride terrains here.

Balneo and Spa

Sports and recreational centre "Banjica" disposes with an Olympic-size swimming pool with dimensions 50 x 25 meters, with thermal water. There is also a children's swimming pool and sports grounds. "Banjica" Centre is located seven kilometres away from Knjaževac among greenery and quietness.

Hiking

The Balkan Mountain offers unique opportunities for hiking. The European long-distance path E4, with its 104 kilometres, is the backbone of all hiking trails in Knjaževac Municipality, as the Alpine Club "Babin Zub" in Knjaževac has marked a total of 214 kilometres of routes and paths.

There are 16 hiking and mountain trails in Knjaževac Municipality. These paths are all marked, but the markings in part of them need to be renewed or corrected. The Alpine Association "Babin Zub" in Knjaževac organizes hiking events:

- "Climbing the Babin Zub"
- "On the Haidouk paths to Midzhur"
- "Climb Midzhur"
- "Climbing the St. Nicholas Pass"

Enology
There are numerous but small wineries in Knjaževac - their total production capacity is about 200,000 litres a year. These are primarily wineries of private producers, most of which also offer wine tasting at the spot, just like the wineries in Belogradchik Municipality.

**Hunting and fishing**

Hunting, as a sports-recreation activity in the region of Knjaževac, has a long tradition. There are favourable conditions for the life of various types of game and the development of hunting in Knjaževac Municipality. There are four game reserves with a total area of about 60,000 hectares in Knjaževac Municipality. These are: "Tupinica", "Serbia Gorska II", "Tresibaba" and "Midzhur" Kalna.

The most common game are trophy animals, pheasant, rabbit and otter. In Tupinica, there is deer, a pheasant farm with 1,500 pheasants, and a section for the hunting of wild boars.

On the territory of the Balkan Mountain, there is a large number of rivers where one can catch trout, chub, gudgeon, white fish, crabs.

The off-road fans are constant guests of Knjaževac Municipality. "Midway Adventure” is an event which is traditionally held in June with the participation of car drivers from all over Europe. The route passes through nearly untrodden rocky paths, through rivers and streams, to the peaks revealing beautiful views.

**3.3.2.3. Tourist flow**

The statistics of the tourist flow to Knjaževac Municipality unambiguously reflect the growth of local tourism with the launch of the "Stara Planina” Ski Centre construction project. The number of visits for the period 2007-2017 has increased by nearly 180%, from 6,036 in 2007 to 16,850 in 2017. This growth is due both to the local market and the visits from abroad - 13,339 visits (+153 %) and 3,511 visits (+357 %), respectively.

The higher growth rate of foreign tourists is gradually changing the tourist flow structure. In 2007, foreign tourists accounted for 12.7% of the total number of tourists, while in 2017 their share reached 20.8%
Similar are the trends in respect of the realized overnight stays. In 2017, their number reached 57,584 which is 3.5 times higher in comparison with 2007. The increase in individual groups follows that of the visits. As regards tourists from the local market, their overnight stays have increased by 217%, while those of foreign tourists are up by 552%. In structural respect, the share of overnight stays realized by foreigners constitute almost 19% of all realized nights.

The average length of a stay for 2017 amounts to 3.4 nights, registering an increase compared to 2007 when it has been 2.7 nights. As concerns the Serbian tourists, their average stay is 3.5 nights, while it is a little shorter in terms of foreigners - 3.1 nights.

The main tourist product of Knjaževac Municipality is winter ski tourism in the region of Babin zub, the Balkan Mountain. There is a potential, to some extent realized, in respect of cultural tourism, extreme sports, hunting tourism, ethno tourism and recreational tourism thanks to the sports grounds, the halls and other facilities which are used in the preparation of sports teams.

The potential for balneo tourism cannot be realized for the time being due to the insufficient bed capacity.
4. Potential for development

4.1. Indicative products, activities and services

Considering the resource diversity of the region, the evaluation of its potential and that of the individual products and, respectively, their prioritizing, have been influenced by a set of factors:

- **Resource value.** The value of the basic resource used in various aspects - scientific, aesthetic, educational, recreational, etc. affects the degree of uniqueness of the product and affects its competitiveness.

  From this point of view, the Belogradchik Rocks and the Magura Cave are the landmarks of the region, even though it has other specific resources such as the Torlakian lifestyle, traditions and cuisine.

- **High rank or broad range.** Building on the idea of a comprehensive cross-border destination and a common tourist product, priority should be given to products that are based on very high-rank resources (i.e. unique) or such that cover a broad range of the territory of the area as a key prerequisite for the generation of a serious tourist flow and, respectively, broad distribution of the economic benefits of tourism;

- **Market interest.** The formation of the product is not a goal in itself; it is done to meet the specific needs of specific target groups on specific markets. In this sense, the preparation of specific products should be based on the relevant market studies and information on the potential target markets and segments.

  The present general assessment of the potential for adventure tourism uses the general trends of development of the tourist flow both to the region and to the two destinations - Bulgaria and Serbia - as a whole, taking into account the growing interest in adventure tourism. From this point of view, the local markets of Bulgaria (especially Sofia) and Serbia must be evaluated as the main target markets at this stage of development, with all the resulting requirements to the components of the product and the forms of its offering. Of complementary importance are separate segments of third countries (mainly from Western Europe) - e.g. cruise tourists, biking tourists, etc.

- **Local interest.** An important aspect which is also connected with the stability of further actions is how and to what extent local stakeholders are ready to develop a
specific product. Priority should be given to those products that are already actually offered in the region and in the development of which there is both public and private interest - cultural-educational tourism, biking and hiking tourism, skiing, enological tourism, etc.

- An important aspect is being a part of a more large-scale product and/or the possibility for integration with the offering from neighbouring regions into common products, which is a prerequisite for better visibility and recognizability of the market, and the generation of synergies especially in the marketing aspect.

The broad understanding of “adventure tourism” not so much as physical activity and extremity but rather as a strive for going beyond one’s own limits of cultural, natural and geographical convenience and discovering something new, allows the formation, development and marketing of numerous individual products in the cross-border region. Each product is developed on the basis of a given resource and includes specific sites, attractions, services and entertainment, and must follow its own strategy of development that is supposed to position it on the market and sell it. At the same time, each product is developed in the context of the others - in respect of territory, resources and function, and when compared to other products, it plays a diversifying role by providing additional services and attractions.

There is a similar dependence in respect of the markets, advertising and channels for sale. Each product has its specifics which must be used in its marketing, but at the same time, these specifics contribute to the general tourist marketing of the region.

In general, the region is assessed as relatively unknown and less popular, which impedes the tourist development. In light of the nature of adventure tourism, however, it is exactly the pioneering nuance that might make people travel to the region - an unknown destination with conserved nature and specific cultural traditions.

Indicative products, activities and services.

Cultural tourism.
The tourist product that is traditional for the region includes a visit to the major cultural and natural landmarks, a contact (in a different form and to a different extent) with the natural environment and, of course, tasting of local cuisine and wines. In this form, the trip to the
destination includes all inherent components of adventure tourism and only small steps are needed - mainly a matter of **interpretation and advertising** - to be perceived as an adventurous journey.

It would be important for the region to preserve and develop events and attractions such as the festival “Opera of the Peaks - Belogradchik Rocks” and the tasting of wines in the Magura Cave. In addition to the uniqueness of the experience itself - ordinary activities in an unusual environment - similar events target visitors with higher income, a higher level of education and cultural interests so that they could contribute to the promotion and positioning of the destination.

At the same time, the region has the necessary resources to also develop specialized offering - **specialized tours** (e.g. archaeological and historical tours), visits to or participation in reconstructions of historical events or local rituals and holidays - different forms which deepen both the contact with the local community and the pioneering/experimental element in the journey.

In this respect, the least exploited resource element which is specific and common for the whole region is the **Torlakian lifestyle and traditions**. Specialized programmes dedicated to the contact and familiarization with the Torlaks, involving both passive educational component and participation (in events, traditional productions, etc.), make a typical example of a "cultural adventure".

In so far as part of the tourist flow is presently motivated by the **local cuisine and wine**, these resources have the potential to attract special interest - culinary adventures, wine tours, ethno vacations. The form and extent of overlapping the wine and the cuisine in the product is a function of the interest of the relevant market segment and there can be great diversity - specialized enological tours, complex programs for acquaintance with the traditional lifestyle and local productions, culinary tours, Taste and Bike and so on.

**Ski tourism** is seen as a priority for the region, especially in Knjaževac Municipality. With regard to the effect of the construction of “Stara planina” ski zone and with a view to the planned expansion of the bed capacity to reach 20,000 beds, ski tourism will be, at least for this part of the region, the engine of the tourist and economic development.
On the Bulgarian side, there are intentions to build tourist and ski zone "Midzhur" on the territory of Chuprene Municipality. The project was launched in 2012-2013 and envisions the construction of 14 ski runs with a total length of 16 km, rope park, Rollbahn track for winter and summer sledding on a tubular structure, panoramic sites and places for recreation. The project is still in its preparatory phase. A master plan and the necessary impact assessments were prepared at the end of 2017. Because of its proximity to Chuprene Reserve and its overlapping with part of protected zone "Midzhur", the project encounters some resistance from environmental organizations.

At present, this is the investment project which has the capacity to change the quality of the economic profile of the entire municipality as well as of the neighbouring ones, and from the point of view of tourism, to generate more significant and lasting tourist flows. What is more, the concept plans a year-round exploitation of the zone which will minimize the seasonality which is traditional for similar zones.

In the context of adventure tourism, ski zones have their potential both for the formation of individual offers and as components of complex regional products. In its standard form, skiing is by itself an adventurous activity for certain consumers. In addition, they are a suitable basis to provoke an interest in the region as a skiing destination and, through the development of related services (skiing instructors, equipment rental, etc.) to allow subsequent upgrade of activities such as ski orienteering, freeride, snowshoeing, etc. On the other hand, ski holidays are an example of the typical complex product which includes, in addition to the basic physical activity (skiing) and continuous contact with nature, to become familiar with the local cuisine and traditions, and other educational elements and attractions.

**Biking tourism** in its varieties (mountain, road) could have a conceptual role for the formation of the adventure tourism products insofar as it ensures simultaneously physical activity and contact with nature which is typical for this type of tourism. At the same time, the use of a bike as a means of transport provokes a direct contact with the local community and limits the dependence on the transport infrastructure in the destination as a factor for development of tourism.
The presence of marked routes throughout the region and of local structures permanently engaged with this product suggests that the region should be formed and marketed as mountain biking destination. An additional prerequisite are also the specialized events of national character held in the towns of Belogradchik and Knjaževac. Except as a tool for promotion of the region, they could lay the beginning of a common calendar of events with competitive, adventurous and educational character.

A poorly used and even less known fact in favour of biking tourism in the region is that is is a part of the EuroVelo 13 "The Iron Curtain Trail". The international route passes through Knjaževac and its main track continues to Pirot, but an alternative of this section in the direction of Belogradchik has been developed.

**Eco tourism**, in its numerous varieties, is one of the forms of adventure tourism currently presented in the region. Each of the municipalities has a rich network of hiking routes and tracks with different level of difficulty that bring into contact with nature and promote physical activity. Part of them contain the educational element more broadly - eco tours (interpretative), educational paths and possibilities for observation of rare and protected species, specific relief forms, etc. The diversification of the available tours with elements of adventure/survival is yet another opportunity for their development in a more attractive direction. The main locations for this purpose are the protected territories.

The well-developed network of game reserves and hunting infrastructure, in combination with the presence of rare and protected species and rich biodiversity, are a prerequisite for diversification of the offering of photo hiking and wildlife photography.

It is possible to additionally expand the recreation and holiday infrastructure through the designation of places for outdoor camping, the offering of a “scout camp”, etc. and in the presence of an investment interest - more large-scale attractions, e.g. an adventure park.

The region disposes with resources to develop a constant offering of typical adventure activities such as rock climbing, caving, paragliding, water sports, off-road tours and safaris, horseback riding and tours, hot-air balloon flights and so on. Part of them are accessible at present as extra services offered at certain lodging places or as an activity of sports clubs and NGOs, but they still have a rather diversifying character. For these activities to act as an
incentive for certain market segments for travelling to the region and to make the destination be associated with them, it is necessary to create and promote specialized products. Moreover, the events which are currently organized in the region under certain themes can be substantially beneficial.

4.2. Main problems and challenges
In general, the region is facing common problems and challenges which to a certain degree also affect the development of tourism, including adventure tourism. Key among them are:

- **The general economic situation** of the region is characterised by high unemployment rates, incl. among young people, and low economic activity. There are no large industrial undertakings or serious investments (with the exception of "Stara planina” ski zone). This situation turns tourism into the main economic alternative for local communities and draws the managerial attention to it. The planning documents in all municipalities, as well as at the higher territorial levels, consider tourism as a key priority of development. This creates a positive situation which contributes to the better public understanding of the tourism needs and facilitates the access to the financial instruments of operational programmes.

- **Transport access and intra-regional links.** The region is not yet able to fully benefit from its good location (incl. in the cross-border aspect) and its close proximity to the main generating markets (e.g. Sofia) due to the inadequate density and, above all, the state of the road network. This applies to the access to the region and especially to the intra-regional links. The main obstacle for the connection of routes (pedestrian, biking) and the offering of cross-border programmes is the state border and the limited opportunities for its crossing. The key measures for a positive change have been identified - expansion of E79, construction of the tunnel under Petrohan, opening of a Kadi Boaz Border Checkpoint, but their implementation should be carried out at the national/international level at which local stakeholders can play a role only through lobbying; Road infrastructure providing access to all the locations, but parts of it are in poor condition.

- State of the common infrastructure. As an element of an environment where tourists travel, solutions should be sought at regional level for a number of problems related to the general infrastructure - construction of sewers in the
small settlements, organization of separate collection and removal of household waste, promoting the use of alternative sources for heating, comprehensive development of settlements and so on. These conditions do not necessarily drive the tourist flow to the destination, but they do play a role in shaping the image of the destination in certain segments;

- **Demographic crisis.** The most significant problem of the region is connected with its demographic state. There are lasting trends of reduction in the number of the population, negative rate of natural increase (especially in the Bulgarian part), ageing population. The decreased employment rate has activated processes such as migration and lasting loss of qualified human resources.

Along with the general problems, specific problems are also revealed in respect of tourism, the development of individual products, as well as in respect of individual municipalities. Their review indicates the following.

- **Synchronized planning and management.** The strive for the formation of a single destination with common products is impossible without single planning and management. Because of the cross-border nature of the region, it is more realistic to work for the synchronized actions of the individual municipalities in respect of the tourist development to allow synergy and complementarity of results. The available good partnership between the municipalities is a good basis to work for a permanent, advisory form at regional level to compensate for the lack of a DMO in different aspects - marketing, coordination, planning and so on;

- **Staff resources and staff qualification;** The shortage of qualified specialists determines the low quality of services provided and is a major risk for the tourist development of the region. An adverse circumstance is also the status of the educational infrastructure and the lack of a specialized educational establishment or classes specializing in the field of tourism;

At the same time, the profile of supply - small facilities run by family owners and/or as an additional economic activity - requires measures for further education and training in areas such as language and professional skills, hospitality and so on.
With a view to the future product development, there will be further need of prepared staff for the provision of a wide range of additional services, which also requires preventive action.

An important aspect is to promote the benefits of tourism among the local population and to expand the circle of persons who have access to them. This is necessary for the purpose of developing an overall hospitable environment to respond to the contact sought by adventure tourists.

- **Fragmentation of the regional presentation.** Despite the apparent actions taken in the recent years towards a single regional marketing, the joint initiatives, particularly in a cross-border aspect, are still of episodic nature. At the same time, the shaping of common products and the functioning as a single destination requires not only an intra-regional organization and partnership, but also single and overall presentation of the market. At present, the cross-border nature of the region restricts the possibilities achieve this in full volume, however, certain actions are possible and are being taken - using the network of information centres for the provision of information about the whole region, joint participation at tourist exhibitions, joint organization of familiarization and journalistic tours, organization of joint events and so on.

At a later stage, we can proceed to more large-scale measures such as elaboration and implementation of a joint marketing plan, introduction of mechanisms (through the tourist associations or PPP) for joint financing of the regional marketing by the administration and the private sector, etc.;

- **State of the material and technical facilities.** Considered as a whole, with the exception of several short periods, the region has a sufficient bed capacity to meet the current tourist demand. In a future context, however, this capacity will be insufficient, and a specialized infrastructure should be developed in parallel with the diversification of the tourist product. This is especially true for the Bulgarian part insofar as the implementation of the Midzhur Tourist Ski Zone project will generate new tangible tourist flows and the project itself does not provide for the construction of new places for accommodation.
Other weaknesses are associated with certain territorial disparities in the distribution of lodging places (Chuprene Municipality lags behind considerably) and with shortcomings of the category structure, with predominance of low-class lodging places;

- **The improvement of the exposure and the socialization of resources** should not stop, as its possible forms are extremely diverse - introducing modern forms of presentation, development of attractions, construction of buffer zones, commercial sites and service infrastructure, organized offering and promotion of demo opportunities/ participation in crafts, customs, traditions; linking the existing routes for hiking and biking tourism in a comprehensive network, marking the new thematic/interpretative routes, promoting the local cuisine and drinks, incl. through specialized establishments, attractions/tasting, participation of tourists in the traditional production, food souvenirs and so on.

- **Tourist information service.** The activity of the existing information centres must be maintained and financially secured. In parallel, the availability of information about the road network should also be improved by placing information and instructional signs and boards for the tourist product as well as for individual sites, and to promote the setting of an information exchange system within the region - both as a public service provided by the administration and as a partnership between the individual tourist enterprises.
5. Conclusion

The modern understanding of adventure tourism goes beyond the narrow frames of travel saturated with extreme experiences and utmost physical loads which reveals to the cross-border region of Belogradchik-Chuprene-Knjaževac opportunities to diversify and develop its offering as a destination for adventure tourism as well.

The main preconditions for this is the potential of resources - rich biological diversity and natural landmarks, historical and cultural resources, the specifics of the Torlakian lifestyle and traditions, delicious cuisine and quality wines, etc.

The problems facing the region are complex and heterogeneous and require a comprehensive approach and coordinated actions requiring maximum engagement and loading of the available good partnerships between the municipalities and attracting a wide local interest in the development of concrete products and activities.
6. Applications

6.1. Good Practices
With a view to the subject and scope of the research, we have selected examples of good practices that can be addressed to the specific problems of tourism development in the cross-border region and/or are applicable to the present conditions and resources.

The selection of examples is subordinated to several leading criteria:

1. To have been applied in any of the EU member states and/or to have a cross-border nature;
2. To stimulate sustainable development;
3. To be innovative;

The selected practices affect subjects that are closely related to the latest trends in the development of tourism in Europe such as sustainability, accessibility, IT application and, when implemented in the region, to be able to give a contemporary image and a competitive profile of the destination.

Each practice is accompanied by a specific idea for its application in the region or we have highlighted that of its components which would be of benefit.

1. Balloon adventure

Category: tourist attraction; adventure tourism

Country: Bulgaria

Objective:
To contribute to the development of tourism and the improvement of the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources in the cross-border region Romania-Bulgaria through the creation of a new tourist product with the participation of all interested in the development of tourism.

Description
ARDBC-Vidin implements the "Balloon Adventure - A New Joint Tourist Product” project in partnership with the Romanian ARIES - Oltenia organization and Agency for Regional Development and Business Centre 2000 - Montana. The idea of the project is to develop a new cross-border tourist product based on flying with a hot-air balloon.

The newly developed tourist attraction will be included in the tourist offers available in the entire cross-border zone. A network for the promotion of the new product will also be created. The new tourist product is expected to attract more foreign tourists and thus increase the number of overnight stays in the cross-border region covering 8 districts in Bulgaria and 7 districts in Romania.

In implementation of the project, 2 hot-air balloons and the necessary equipment were purchased. Ground staff and pilots were trained. A detailed marketing strategy was developed for the promotion of the new product and its implementation has started - promotional flying over the cross-border zone, production of advertising materials, tethered demo rides and so on.

In addition to the main service - flying with a balloon or tethered lifting, customers are offered additional services, such as shooting the flight with a sports camera from the balloon itself or shooting the flight with a drone, recording a disk during the flight, placing it in an appropriate packaging and presenting it to the passengers immediately after the end of the flight.

Applicability

The described practice is actually being offered on the territory of the cross-border region as a tourist service - Belogradchik Rocks, Rabisha Lake and Chuprene Municipality are defined by the initiators as suitable areas for flying. At the same time, the "Balloon Adventure" is an example of initiating, planning and deployment of a new tourist attraction in the sphere of adventure tourism.

As a major challenge for the stability of the product, the team sees the ability of the partners to ensure the consistency of the proposed service which is relevant as a problem to each additional tourist service offered in the area - to go from "accidental" to regular offering. In the particular case, as a key factor is assessed the availability of a qualified staff to provide the service.

- **Link for further information**
  
  http://balloonadventure.eu/bg/
2. Walking trails in natural and cultural reserves

Category: Development of specialized infrastructure; IT applications
Country: Greece, Cyprus

Objective:
- Sustainable use and management of the natural resources.
- Promoting the attractiveness of the rural areas of the Lesbos Island.
- Conservation, promotion and networking of the local historical and cultural sites and natural resources
- Strengthening the prospects for development of specialized types of tourism
- Promoting the region by facilitating the access and raising the public awareness of the environment

Description
In the described case, the good practice is based on an innovative approach to the use of natural and cultural resources through actions aimed at quality, competitiveness and openness with a strong structure for cooperation and networks. Interactive web-based applications are used to promote the characteristics of the environment and the cultural resources of the area.

Four island development companies - a company for local development in Lesbos, local development in Heraklion, District Agency for Development of Larnaca, local development in Paphos and the mayor of Archanon - Asterousion join efforts, ideas and ambitions to promote their regions, to present them in an innovative way as a common region with common characteristics and features.

Some of the main activities which have been fulfilled during the implementation process include:
- marking and placing uniform signage on 7 trails that combine natural and cultural heritage;
- development of 12 different specific thematic packages:
- conducting 8 trainings for professionals and unemployed in new specialized activities and professions;
development of a technological system (with the aid of GPS technologies as well) for interactive on-line presentation of resources and development of free Android applications.

Applicability
The most important and innovative aspects of this good practice allow the visitor, via a user-friendly interactive portal, to seek and filter information about all natural and cultural-historical aspects of the area. This allows the users to visit the area at any time and to dynamically change their route and plans according to their wishes. Using web-based applications, end users are able to modify the selected walking trail by adding points of interest to it, thus making it more interactive and interesting.

The described practice is interesting for the cross-border region in another respect as well. In an organizational aspect, it has been implemented by organizations of different type working in different fields without being united in a common structure, i.e. they have only been connected for the implementation of the specific idea. In the case of the cross-border region "Belogradchik – Chuprene - Knjaževac", a similar result-oriented approach would be a solution for the diversity of stakeholders and the lack of a single DMO structure.

- Link for further information

- Source of information
http://www.grisiplus.eu/
3. Mura-Drava.bike

Category: cycling tourism; networks; IT applications
Country: Slovenia, Croatia

Objective:

The general objective is to provide sustainable economic and social development of the border regions of Slovenia and Croatia.

The specific objective of the project is to create attractive cross-border destinations for cycling tours along the Mura and Drava rivers.

Description

In Slovenia and Croatia, the project extends the already established routes along the rivers in Austria so that they can reach the river mouths. In this way, the existing tourist packages are enriched and connected with the cycling routes along the Danube.

The project involves the building of cycling alleys along the Drava and Mura rivers and of a navigation system for bikers. The GPS system allows you to transfer data from the Internet to mobile devices and make on-line inquiries at any time and any place. There is a great variety of useful information - main routes, local cuisine, cultural and natural landmarks, contact information and so on. Users can choose between different panoramic maps/images, watch videos of the main routes and collect important tourist information.

The most important element of the successful good practice transfer are the local people. This is why a large part of the project activities are aimed at key organizations, target groups, service providers and other stakeholders. A training of the service providers along the routes has been conducted, including a visit for training purposes to a neighbouring country was organized, and special manuals for this purpose have been prepared.

The route has been advertised at three fairs abroad, through promotional materials, photographs and short movies, as well as in the specialized press. A special webpage has been created, along with GPS for all users.

Applicability
The creation of a navigation system in two countries having different laws requires the joint work of different institutions and partners. The project has been implemented by 10 partners who have precisely defined the potential for development, motivated the main stakeholders and performed the necessary activities.

The main outcome of the project is a completed route - one of the most interesting in Europe. This route becomes a brand which attracts bikers who are fond of long distances. At the same time, the route is a skeleton which also attracts local teams. There are local bikers who use the circular alleys on a daily basis.

Once transferred in the cross-border region, this practice could be interpreted in the creation of one main track (cycling route; “adventure” track or otherwise), built from interrelated elements and directed toward a longer stay in the area, where each individual element may also be offered independently for shorter visits. At the same time, the starting and end point could be a link to offers of the neighbouring regions (e.g. cycling route, walking trail) and so the cross-border region can be integrated into a larger network.

- Link for further information

- Source of information
  http://www.grisiplus.eu/
4. AMBER Rural Tourism

Category: Training; IT applications

Country: Spain

Objective:
Development of a professional self-training programme in the field of rural tourism.

Description
The AMBER Rural Tourism project is realized under the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The training programme is focused on the needs of current and future entrepreneurs and employees in the field of rural tourism, small- and medium-sized enterprises, regional and local organizations for the development of the sector as well as of the unemployed people. It covers disciplines such as marketing, hospitality, attracting customers by offering additional activities in the field of rural tourism.

The project’s end products are the following training modules:
- "Skills in the field of information technology in rural tourism - improving the entrepreneurship opportunities and marketing potential" - contains an interactive training material "How to create and publish your own tourist website";
- “Basic principles of hospitality in small establishments in the field of rural tourism”;
- “Activities in the field of rural tourism - additional attractions for customers” - includes four submodules: "Goodies - an idea of tapas (traditional Spanish appetizers)", “Tour Guiding", "Recreational Fishing", "Sauna in Rural Tourism".

The modules are provided on a CD (with interactive elements) and on paper. The modules have been developed by taking into account all the features of the regions in the individual countries: national legislation, socio-cultural environment, geographical location, the standard of living and certification of hotels.

Applicability
As a whole, the greater part of projects in the field of training are implemented under the Leonardo da Vinci programme by partner organizations from at least three countries. In the
field of training, with the advance in the information technologies, there has been an increasing focus on the development of web-based platforms containing self-training modules. The advantages of this method are that it is relatively cheap and reaches to an unlimited number of users from different countries around the world. Normally, these modules are free to access, but sometimes passwords need to be used.

The advantage of this practice lies in the free access to such training platforms. Considering the current profile of lodging places in the cross-border region - mostly small facilities run by their owners, usually as a complementary economic activity - such forms of (self-)training ensure the necessary flexibility in terms of topics, time commitment and expense. Insofar as a large part of the materials are in English, there is an option to draw on the idea itself and initiate a similar project at a regional level.

- Link for further information

- Source of information
  Project No. BG161PO001/4.2-01/2008/010 „Sharing of Successful European Practices in Alternative Tourism - Key to a Sustainable Regional Development in the Municipalities of Krushari and Tervel”
5. The Wild Taiga

Category: Tourist attractions

Country, city: Finland

Description:
The Wild Taiga is located in the easternmost part of Finland near its border with Russia. It is situated in the westernmost part of the Eurasian Taiga. The area is covered with coniferous forests, meadows formed during the ice age period, pristine rivers and a rich animal world. A number of battles have taken place here in the past. The economy of the region is based on the small family business, with the marketing strategy of the destination relying on advertising the local way of life, traditions and natural environment.

These characteristics allow wildlife observation and photography. The region is one of the best ones for observation of brown bear, lynx and wolf. There are two wildlife visitor information centres. The area allows a great variety of outdoor activities - from horseback riding and fishing to biking and kayaking. During the autumn days, there is a possibility for picking of mushrooms and wild berries. For the lovers of strong emotions, there is a 100-km marked biking trail built in Hossa, near the Russian border.

The Kaleval Spirit Park is a new attraction having its main features based on the local culture and natural beauty. The park offers numerous attractions, activities and programmes such as:

- “Test How Finnish Are You” hike - this is a kind of organized stay in the forest with the aim of getting as much close to the conditions of life in the nature as possible. The participants live in a wooden hut, hike through the forest and so on.
- "Steal the Sampo” Game - this is a thematic game for children. Every child is given a map with marked objects hidden by the Chimney-sweeper which they must find.
- "A Christmas Fairy Tale" - the adventure includes three elements - meeting with Santa and an Evening with Santa. Visitors bake Santa’s favourite sweets, seek Santa with the aid of the elves, ride a sleigh pulled by reindeers, have a true Christmas dinner and so on. This attraction is one of the most preferred, as reservations for it run out in the early autumn.
Another attraction offered by local restaurants is the so-called "Orthodox buffet” which includes a set of traditional steamed and roasted dishes. The food is selected according to the season thus ensuring a great variety of dishes at any time of the year. Conditions have been created for tourists to prepare a traditional Karelian pie.

**Applicability**

The practice is an example not so much of the individual actions that are applicable in the studied region, but rather of the building of an eco-park providing a number of entertainments for visitors of any age. The practice shows how the added product (culinary activities, games, thematic excursions and so on) may enhance the local natural and historical sights turning the natural park in an attractive tourist destination.

A similar broader initiative (investment; project) in the cross-border region has the potential to combine all basic resources in a broad offering of services, programmes and attractions, while at the same time it would be the only one of its kind in this part of the continent. In addition to the purely economic benefits (job openings, employment, related businesses), it would also have the respective branding effect for the region.

- **Link for further information**
  
  http://www.wildtaiga.fi/en/
6.2. List of stakeholders

**Belgradchik**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belogradchik Municipality</td>
<td><strong>Services and Information Centre</strong>&lt;br&gt;3900 Belogradchik, 6, Knyaz Boris I Str. /ground floor/&lt;br&gt;Mobile: 0877 875978, e-mail: <a href="mailto:info@belogradchik.bg">info@belogradchik.bg</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biking Club “Skala”</td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:radizala@abv.bg">radizala@abv.bg</a>, <a href="mailto:clubskala@clubskala.org">clubskala@clubskala.org</a>&lt;br&gt;Tel: +359 885 351 563, +359 898 533 385&lt;br&gt;Address: town of Belogradchik 3900, 26, Hristo Botev Str.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Museum</td>
<td>Belogradchik, 1, Kapitan Krastyo Str.&lt;br&gt;e-mail: <a href="mailto:muzeibelogradchik@abv.bg">muzeibelogradchik@abv.bg</a>, Tel.: 0936 /5 34 - 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Cultural Club “Razvitie-1893”</td>
<td><a href="mailto:slovobel@mail.bg">slovobel@mail.bg</a>&lt;br&gt;town of Belogradchik, 1, Vazrazhdane Sq., Tel.: +3599363359</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orienteering Club</td>
<td><a href="http://venetsa-belogradchik.weebly.com">http://venetsa-belogradchik.weebly.com</a>&lt;br&gt;Belogradchik Youth Centre&lt;br&gt;4, Vasil Levski Str.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magura Winery</td>
<td><a href="http://www.magurawinery.bg/">http://www.magurawinery.bg/</a>&lt;br&gt;village of Rabisha, Vidin District 3938&lt;br&gt;e-mail: <a href="mailto:magura.winery@gmail.com">magura.winery@gmail.com</a>&lt;br&gt;Tel.: 093 29 62 30&lt;br&gt;Fax: 093 29 63 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borovitsa Winery</td>
<td>village of Borovitsa, Tel.: 088 741 0619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Aninata kashta&quot;*</td>
<td>village of Stakevtsi, Belogradchik Municipality,&lt;br&gt;Tel.: +359 888764423,&lt;br&gt;e-mail: <a href="mailto:boqnminkov@abv.bg">boqnminkov@abv.bg</a>&lt;br&gt;<a href="https://www.stakevci.com/">https://www.stakevci.com/</a></td>
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<td>Hostel ”West house”*</td>
<td>Belogradchik, 29, Poruchik Dvoryanov Str.,&lt;br&gt;Tel. + 359 936 53658, <a href="mailto:Hostel.belogradchik@gmail.com">Hostel.belogradchik@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Apartment “Belle View”*</td>
<td>Belogradchik, 1, Vasil Levski Str.; 0876-727-220</td>
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<tr>
<td>Viko Hostel*</td>
<td>5, Tsar Ivan Stratsimir Str., Belogradchik;&lt;br&gt;Tel. +359 878364306, <a href="mailto:viko_hostel@dir.bg">viko_hostel@dir.bg</a>,</td>
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<td>Villa “Albacita”*</td>
<td>0878 602 682</td>
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<tr>
<td>Villa “Alex”**</td>
<td>village of Izvos, Belogradchik, Tel. +359 889451193; +359 889324582, <a href="mailto:villaalex@abv.bg">villaalex@abv.bg</a></td>
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<td>Villa “Madzharovi”*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Villa “Markashnitsa”*</td>
<td>Belogradchik, village of Izvos; 0887-772-467; <a href="http://www.markashnica.com/">http://www.markashnica.com/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Camping Madonna*</td>
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<tr>
<td>House “Relax”*</td>
<td>village of Dabravka, Belogradchik Municipality, Tel.: +359 886930468; +359 878781672</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest house &quot;Gorski kat”*</td>
<td>village of Granitovo, Belogradchik Municipality, Tel.: +359 879894190, email: <a href="mailto:ianis_79@abv.bg">ianis_79@abv.bg</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest house &quot;Dzhaya”**</td>
<td>12, Peyo Yavorov Str., Belogradchik, Tel.: +359 889630716</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest house &quot;Ego”**</td>
<td>26, Treti mart Str., Belogradchik; tel.: +359 899171710; +359 897963656; e-mail: <a href="mailto:egosat@abv.bg">egosat@abv.bg</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest house &quot;Elena”*</td>
<td>town of Belogradchik, PC 3900 22, Treti mart Str.; 0886/57-29-18; <a href="http://belogradchik-elena.com">http://belogradchik-elena.com</a></td>
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<td>Guest house &quot;Meteriz”**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest house &quot;Primaverà”*</td>
<td>9, Petko Kazandzhi Str., Belogradchik, +359 936 54050, +359 899368941, <a href="mailto:primaverahouse@abv.bg">primaverahouse@abv.bg</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest house &quot;Bedrock”*</td>
<td>town of Belogradchik 13, Hadzhi Dimitar Str. Tel.: 0936/53930 Web: <a href="https://hotelbedrock.com">https://hotelbedrock.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest house &quot;Artes”*</td>
<td>6, Polkovnik Kantili Str. 3900 Belogradchik; 088 636 5410</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest house &quot;Byalata chernitsa”*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest house &quot;Genchevi”*</td>
<td>8, V. Levski Str., Belogradchik, +359 93653733, +359 899529265, <a href="mailto:marusia_todorova@abv.bg">marusia_todorova@abv.bg</a></td>
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<td>Guest house &quot;Dramite”**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest house &quot;Zora”**</td>
<td>2, Haydut Velko Str., Belogradchik, Tel.: +359 936 53930, +359 888713539; email: <a href="mailto:angel_drakata@abv.bg">angel_drakata@abv.bg</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest house &quot;Pri Nevena”**</td>
<td>town of Belogradchik, 16, Hristo Botev Str.; 0936 / 543 66</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest house &quot;Castle Cottage”**</td>
<td>36, Tsolo Todorov Str. Belogradchik, Tel.: +359 898 623 727</td>
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<td>Guest house &quot;Geto”*</td>
<td>Belogradchik, 47, Treti mart Str.; 0888782892</td>
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<td>Guest house &quot;Nezabravka”*</td>
<td>village of Chiflitsi; Tel.: 0897 865 934 E-mail: <a href="mailto:nezabravka_belogradchik@mail.bg">nezabravka_belogradchik@mail.bg</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest house &quot;Int”**</td>
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<td>town of Belogradchik; 13, Poruchik Cholakov Str.; 0936 54438;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest House and Tavern “Madonna**</td>
<td>Falkovets, Yanyovets 3949, Vidin District Road N 114 Belogradchik- Lom Tel.: +359 894774746, Fax: +359 93655646 e-mail: <a href="mailto:info@hanmadona.com">info@hanmadona.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest rooms &quot;Pri Poli&quot;*</td>
<td>village of Rabisha, Tel.: +359 886696447</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest rooms &quot;Pri Tedi&quot;*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest rooms &quot;Gerika&quot;*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hotel “The Rocks”**</td>
<td>Belogradchik, 1, Hadzhi Dimitar Str.; Tel.: +359 936 54002; +359 898733818</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hotel “Dalija”**</td>
<td>1, Saedinenie Blvd., Belogradchik; Tel.: +359 88641528; email: <a href="mailto:hotel_dalia@abv.bg">hotel_dalia@abv.bg</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rai Hotel*</td>
<td>3, Tsar Ivan Stratsimir Str., Belogradchik, Tel.: +359 936 53735; +359 894702917</td>
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### Chuprene

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<td>Chuprene Municipality</td>
<td>village of Chuprene, Vidin District 55, Asen Balkanski Str.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tel.: 09327/2580; <a href="http://www.chuprene.com">www.chuprene.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>LOCAL INITIATIVE GROUP “WESTERN BALKAN</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MOUNTAIN - KOPREN - MIDZHUR</td>
<td>town of Chiprovtsi, 2, Tocho voyvoda Str.,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coordinator: Krasimira Zhivkova; 0889 25 02 80; e-mail: <a href="mailto:kr.jivkova@mail.bg">kr.jivkova@mail.bg</a>;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.mig-zapadnastaraplanina.com">www.mig-zapadnastaraplanina.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hut “Gorski rai”</td>
<td>Tel.: 0887 414 038 / 0878 856 005; e-mail: <a href="mailto:gorski_rai@yahoo.com">gorski_rai@yahoo.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hut “Midzhur”</td>
<td>0888 204 268; 0888 562 394</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Game Reserve “Midzhur”</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dgs-midjur.szdp.bg/">http://www.dgs-midjur.szdp.bg/</a>; Tel.: 0936 540 96; Fax: 0936 32 42</td>
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<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:ddsmidzhur@abv.bg">ddsmidzhur@abv.bg</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tourist Dormitory - Chuprene</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tic_chuprene@abv.bg">tic_chuprene@abv.bg</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest house Sredogriv</td>
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<td>Krasismir Kirilov -</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest house Gorni Lom</td>
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<td>Gergana Yakimova Itsina</td>
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<td>House museum of Asen Balkanski, village of</td>
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<td>Chuprene</td>
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<td>House of Crafts, village of Gorni Lom.</td>
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<td>Public Cultural Club “Hr. Botev - 1897”</td>
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<td>village of Chuprene, 2, Trideset i peta Str., Tel. 0885 024 929</td>
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<td>Public Cultural Club “Nov zhivot-1927”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Cultural Club “Prof. Asen Zlatarov” village of Targovishte</td>
<td>village of Targovishte, 44, Parva Str.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Cultural Club “Hristo Botev-1927” village of Sredogriv”</td>
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### Knjaževac

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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</table>
| Knjaževac Municipality | soknjazevac@mts.rs  
Phone: 019 732 730, 733 119, Exchange 731 601, 623, 633, 614, 712  
Fax: 019 732 730  
http://www.knjazevac.rs |
| Tourist Organization of Knjaževac Municipality | Knjaževac, Miloša Obilića 1, Tel./Fax: 019 735 230,  
E/mail: toknjazevac@open.telekom.rs |
| Town Museum | Карађорђева 15  
19350 Књажевац  
тел/факс: 019 731 407, 019 730 665  
контакт особа: Милена Мишевић Мићић, кустоц  
E-mail: timacum@ptt.rs,  
muzejknjazevac@open.telekom.rs |
| Ethno Park | Карађорђева 15  
19350 Књажевац  
тел/факс: 019 731 407, 019 730 665  
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muzejknjazevac@open.telekom.rs |
| Residence "Villa Katarina" | 2 019 733 379; 019733279;  
demetrakn@open.telekom.rs |
| "Barka" | 2 019732495 |
| Mali Predah | 019,739,100; 019739200; mali.predah@open.telekom.rs |
| Konak "Markov Konak" | 2 019 732,103; 063 8054550; konakciric@hotmail.rs |
| Internat | 2 019733142; duss.knjaz@neobee.com |
| STANISAVLJEVIC SNEŽANA | 2 062 8438151; 063 843 81 51; ankagad@hotmail.rs |
| MOUNTAIN LODGE "Babin Zub" | 2 019 732 543 or 019 730 570;  
str.knjazevac@gmail.com |
| Hotel "Stara Planina" | 2 019 319 5135, reservation@hotelstaraplanina.com |
| Babin Zub, | 2 019 731 781, rtcstaraplanina@epsturs.com |
| KONAK "kicks" | 2019 760 553 and 060 60 111 33 |
| KONAK Stara Planina | 20645527913; office@konakstaraplanina.com  
www.konakstaraplanina.com |
| VILLA "BOGDANOVIĆ" | 038165080735; www.vila-bogdanovic.rs |
| RELAY Gabrovnica | 038119760499 |
| ACCOMMODATION RISTIĆ | 063 17 00 397; 064 399 61 00 0;65 444 21 44;  
http://smestajristic.info/ |
<p>| ETNO VILLAGE &quot;SRNA&quot; | <a href="mailto:info@etnoselosrna.com">info@etnoselosrna.com</a>; <a href="http://www.etnoselosrna.rs">www.etnoselosrna.rs</a> |</p>
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<td>VILLA &quot;STONE&quot;</td>
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<td>381 64 124 99 09; <a href="mailto:vilababinzub@gmail.com">vilababinzub@gmail.com</a>; <a href="http://www.vila-babinzub.rs">www.vila-babinzub.rs</a></td>
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<td>0669267430</td>
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<td>VILLA &quot;DUKAT&quot;</td>
<td>063 411 021 Dragan Dimitrijevic; <a href="mailto:info@villadukat.com">info@villadukat.com</a>; <a href="http://www.villadukat.com">www.villadukat.com</a></td>
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<td>Overnight &quot;SUN&quot;</td>
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<td>038163418130, <a href="mailto:stajko@kladovonet.com">stajko@kladovonet.com</a></td>
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<td>&quot;BRVNARA CVETKOVIĆ&quot;</td>
<td>0381666655200, <a href="mailto:starplanina10@gmail.com">starplanina10@gmail.com</a>; <a href="http://www.starplaninasmestaj.op.rs">www.starplaninasmestaj.op.rs</a></td>
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<td>&quot;HAPPY HOUSE&quot;</td>
<td><a href="mailto:veselakica965@gmail.com">veselakica965@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td>FARM KOSTIĆ OLIVER - SEDLAR</td>
<td>019 737 040; 064 22 65 456; <a href="mailto:sedlar08@gmail.com">sedlar08@gmail.com</a>; <a href="http://www.sedlar.weebly.com">www.sedlar.weebly.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>STD STANISAVLJEVIĆ TOMISLAV</td>
<td>0655733527; 019 733527 063 10 55 016; <a href="mailto:st.duca@gmail.com">st.duca@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>STD &quot;HAPPY STORY&quot; - MARIJA IVANOVIČ</td>
<td>019 730 631; 060 463 20 73</td>
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<td>063 828 12 76 064 155 21 71; <a href="mailto:svivan@gmail.com">svivan@gmail.com</a>; <a href="http://www.svetozarevic.wix.com">www.svetozarevic.wix.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rusomir farm &quot;Trullo&quot;</td>
<td>063 777 38 01; <a href="mailto:farmakoliba@gmail.com">farmakoliba@gmail.com</a>; <a href="http://www.farmakoliba.com">www.farmakoliba.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>JP „Skijališta Srbije”, Ski centar Stara planina</td>
<td>Tel. 019 731 910, e-mail: <a href="mailto:informacija@skijalistasrbije.rs">informacija@skijalistasrbije.rs</a> .www.skijalistasrbije.rs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ski klub „Midžor” Knjaževac</td>
<td>Tel. 065 688 93 07</td>
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<td>Lovačko udruženje Knjaževac</td>
<td>Kej Velika Vlahovića 19, 19350 Knjaževac Tel. 019/731-705</td>
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<td>Lovačko udruženje Midžor – Kalna</td>
<td>Kalna b.b.; Tel. 019/760-598</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lovačko udruženje Minićevo</td>
<td>Trg slobode b.b., Minićevo Tel: + 381 19 769-605</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kvad klub</td>
<td>Tel. 069 143 18 58 or 063 777 38 01</td>
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Regional, national and international

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<td>ARDBC Vidin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montana Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water</td>
<td><a href="http://www.riosv-montana.com/">http://www.riosv-montana.com/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Holy Bishopric of Vidin</td>
<td>Vidin, 11, Baba Vida Str., Tel.: 094 601 880</td>
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<td>Chess club &quot;Nayden Voynov&quot; - Vidin</td>
<td><a href="http://www.chess.bcvidin.org/">http://www.chess.bcvidin.org/</a></td>
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<td>Sofia Opera and Ballet</td>
<td><a href="https://www.operasofia.bg/">https://www.operasofia.bg/</a></td>
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<td>Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism</td>
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<td>Danube Competence Centre (DCC)</td>
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6.3. Sources

2. Belogradchik Municipality Development Plan 2014-2020
3. Chuprene Municipality Development Plan 2014-2020
4. Marketing strategy for Transdanube regions – Sustainable transport and tourism along the Danube
7. National Spatial Development Concept 2013-2015; Concept for Tourist Zoning of Bulgaria
8. Concept for development of the regional tourist product "Weekend Northwest" of Montana tourist destination - Chiprovtsi - Chuprene - Ruzhints

http://belogradchik.bg/
http://chuprene.com/
http://www.muzejknjazevac.org.rs
http://www.jpstaraplanina.rs/en/
http://www.toknjazevac.org.rs
http://www.knjazevac.rs