

Strategy of ecotourism development in Košice Region



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FOREWORD

Currently, more than ever, the exact definition of the management baselines is one of the basic prerequisites for success in managing tourism destinations. To this end, destination management organizations (DMOs) increasingly use the expanding possibilities of data collection. At the same time, increasing volumes of available data makes it harder to process and analyze them correctly and effectively. This makes great opportunity, and necessity as well, for the cooperation of the DMO with the scientific community, which can guarantee these processes.

The document you hold in your hands is the result of such professional cooperation between the Regional Destination Management Organization Košice Region Tourism (KRT) and the Department of Tourism of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Matej Bel in Banská Bystrica, whose team of authors carefully and patiently analyzed the available data provided by the Košice Region. With the contribution of other major tourism players in the Košice Region, local destination management organizations, civic associations as well as domestic and foreign experts, we have jointly developed the first Strategy for the **Development of Ecotourism in the Košice Region**. The strategy builds on the theory of ecosystem services and aims to harness the region's natural and cultural richness for the development of ecotourism. We are very pleased that it could have been created as part of the **EcoVeloTour** project, to which it also refers in content.

In KRT we have been working for a long time with the assumption that the destination management includes aimed mobilization of the tourism potential of the managed destination and the popularization of its unrecognized exceptionalities. We are aware that it is only by looking for new possibilities and responding to current trends that our destination can have a real chance in fierce competition on both the domestic and European markets.

Even in 2019, shortly before the current global tourism crisis, we watched closely and with great expectations as world tourism grew dynamically. At the same time, we were aware that the dynamics of this growth are also causing negative effects when the sharply accelerated demand for specific sites is damaging the monuments themselves and environmentally damaging the sites in which they are located and devaluing the quality of life of local people. Thus, we were looking within the trends for new approaches to destination management and development, which are directed „upstream“ of mass tourism, and which may be an opportunity for „undiscovered“ destinations. Destinations that manage at the right moment to be brought to the attention of those who continue to look for a real authentic experience. We sought answers to questions about whether the Košice Region was sufficiently equipped to develop ecotourism, sustainable tourism and green mobility connected to them. The Strategy gives us scientifically-based answers to these questions and, despite the ongoing downturn of the whole industry, confirms the assumptions of the Košice region to become an attractive destination for new target groups of environmentally conscious travellers. Although these groups are smaller in number, their attitude and behaviour toward the visited destination are extremely valuable to us. We are aware of the important economic and social benefits of ecotourism for indigenous communities in those locations of the destination that will actively participate in the creation of the ecotourism experiences. Consumers of ecotourism products are mostly educated

visitors who stay longer in the territory of the destination and who make a higher consumption expenditure in the destination compared to a ‚mass‘ tourist. Therefore, we believe that support for the development of ecotourism will be met with understanding in the affected communities and will also be socially perceived as a tool for regional development. We also expect that ecotourism products will create a more personal relationship between visitors and their hosts and that visitors will leave our destination with the feeling that their stay has had a positive impact not only on the environment but also on the local community. These assumptions are also linked to the fact that ecotourism has fewer negative effects on the environment than other forms of tourism.

On the way to its implementation, the Strategy for the Development of **Ecotourism** of the Košice Region sets out priority objectives that will lead to the positive development of ecotourism in individual subregions of the Košice Region. It will also serve as a manual for tourism players to build a product offer and ecotourism experiences in the Košice Region. Together with them, from the position of regional DMO, we will work to ensure that the contribution of tourism to the economy in Košice Self-governing Region is a relevant factor increasing living standards, especially in regions where there are no real conditions for strengthening industrial or agricultural production.

Lenka Vargová Jurková, Executive Director

Košice Region Tourism, November 2020



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1. INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism is defined as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people (TIES, 1990). It combines nature and culture, it is based on community development, it has low impact, it is focused on education and interpretation and it supports local community, conservation and visitor satisfaction. Ecotourism considers principles of sustainable tourism development and particularly it uses natural resources.

Sustainable tourism aims to meet the needs of tourists, taking into account the local population needs and the environment. In order to explicitly or implicitly evaluate the progress towards sustainable development, ecosystem services (ESS), which express the benefits people obtain from ecosystems, are used. Ecosystem services are powerful tool for understanding the relationship between nature and society. Tourism, like any economic sector, is heavily dependent on ecosystem services to develop its activity (Pueyo-Ros, 2018). Tourism needs provisioning services to provide tourists with food, water or energy. Moreover, recreational and cultural ecosystem services are crucial for visitor satisfaction.

The ESS based ecotourism focuses on the following key issues: community-based, slow tourism, special focus on wetlands and cycling tourism, the local attachment and the memorable, interactive experiencing of landscape and connected values (including local resources, food and beverage), connected education and raising sensitivity (WP3 Ecotourism planning, 2019).

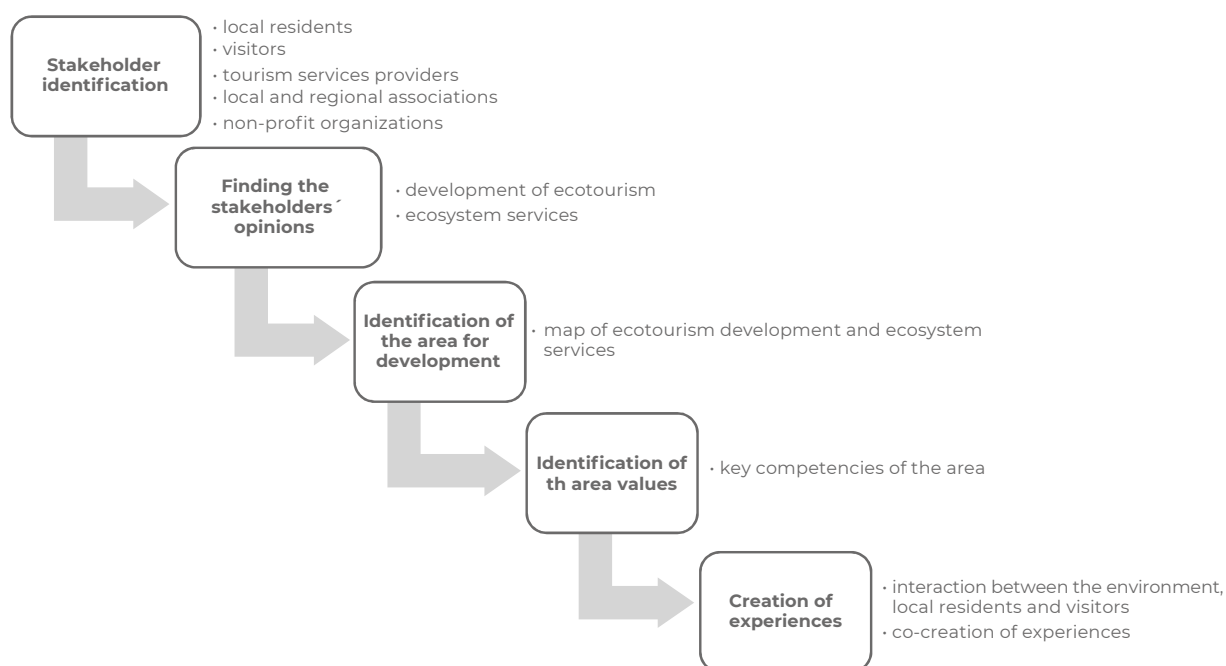
1.1. CONTEXT AND REASONING

The EcoVeloTour Project, on which this strategy is based, fosters the development of sustainable tourism. The background for the strategy is formed by studies on ecotourism and green mobility. The strategy is grounded in the ecosystem services theory and aims to use natural and cultural heritage of the region in favour of ecotourism. Content of the strategy is also enhanced by knowledge exchange with the other work packages of the project, as well as by mapping of the ecosystem services in the Košice Region, intensive cooperation with the key actors, analysis and active participation of the stakeholders on both regional and national levels. One of the means for ecotourism development is cycling or cyclo-tourism, which provide the visitors with the experience of the surroundings. Therefore, the strategy bears on the findings concerning sustainable mobility as well.

1.2. PLANNING PROCESS

Development strategy of ecotourism grounded in ecosystem services should be based on the interdisciplinary perspective – an intersection of natural and social sciences (Drius et al., 2019). For this reason, this strategy is also based on the discussion among several stakeholders involved in nature protection and tourism management and economy. The strategy bears on the identification of the ecotourism trends, which include the examples of good practice from the destinations with developed ecotourism and the ecotourism visitor profile, ecotourism resources and products, as well as cyclo-tourism infrastructure and services. For the purpose of taking the current situation of the ecosystem services and ecotourism development in the Košice region into consideration, the process of analysis is supported by both secondary resources and primary data and consists of the following five steps:

The process of ecotourism development analysis based on the ecosystem services



Such analysis may help identify strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of ecotourism development based on the ecosystem services in the area concerned. The findings will consequently be manifested in the vision and goals, as well as strategic routing of ecotourism development.

1.3. POLICY CONTEXT

Tourism is part of public policy on different levels. The goals of tourism policy vary according to the level (international, national, regional, local) and the importance ratio given to the development of tourism by the international authorities, state administration bodies and the local governments. Nowadays it can be observed that tourism policies emphasize change of approach to tourism development. The support has been shifted from traditional types and forms of tourism towards sustainable development and “soft forms” of tourism.

In 2015, the United Nations Organization (UNO) defined the goals of sustainable development on the international level. They highlight the fact that sustainable development is a common responsibility and an essential component of the national policies and decision-making processes. European Union builds on these goals and presumes competitiveness of European tourism is closely related to its sustainable development. As a result, quality of the tourism destinations mainly depends on their natural and cultural heritage. In Slovakia there are several documents concerning tourism development, which accentuate its sustainable development.

Documents concerning sustainable tourism

Level	Document	Tourism link
International (UNO)	Agenda 2030 for sustainable development (2015)	- 17 sustainable development goals (SDG)
International (UNO)	UNO Environmental Program	- ecotourism as a tool for development
International (European Union)	Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030 (2019)	- fulfilling the SDG principles - sustainable tourism development - ecosystem services of tourism
International (countries partnership - Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, Ukraine)	Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (2003)	- environment protection - benefits of tourism for residents
National (SR)	Vision and strategy of Slovakia development by 2030	- sustainable development of regions - regional tourism
National (SR)	National strategy of sustainable development (2001)	- sustainable tourism as an opportunity to meet the TUR goals
National (SR)	Strategy of tourism development by 2020 (2013)	- development of "soft" forms of tourism - development of cyclo-tourism, walking tourism and water tourism in Slovakia
National (SR)	Strategy of sustainable tourism development by 2030 (in preparation)	- sustainable exploitation of the country potential - support of authentic experiences
National (SR)	Protocol on sustainable tourism (2011)	- support of the country's unique and cultural heritage through tourism
National (SR)	Strategy of environmental policy of the Slovak Republic by 2030 (Greener Slovakia)	- support of the "soft" forms of tourism - increasing environmental awareness
National (SR)	National strategy of bicycle traffic and cyclo-tourism in the Slovak Republic	- cyclo-tourism as an opportunity for sustainable tourism
Regional (KSK – Košice Self-governing Region)	Regional integrated territorial strategy of Košice Region 2014 – 2020	- development of cyclo-tourism

Apart from the strategies and the consequent policies, at different levels there are various professional associations dealing with sustainable tourism and ecotourism development. At the international level, the Ecological Tourism in Europe (Ökologischer Tourismus in Europa e.V.) is worth mentioning. It is a non-profit organization connecting the other organizations involved in nature protection and sustainable tourism. In Slovakia, it is also possible to use cooperation with state-subsidized organizations (e.g. Agentúra pre rozvoj vidieka/Rural Development Agency, Slovenská agentúra životného prostredia/Slovak Environment Agency), non-governmental organizations (Vidiecky parlament/Rural Parliament, Ekopolis, Aevis, Sosna, Vydra, Alter Nativa, etc.) and interest groups or associations (Klub slovenských turistov/Slovak Tourist Club, Slovenský cykloklub/Slovak Cycloclub).

Formulation of ecotourism development policy at the regional level is one of the outputs of this strategy. It is a declaration of the stakeholders' opinions consensus, which specifies the bearers (competencies and responsibilities) as well as the tools for reaching the economic, environmental and social goals. The tools that are mostly used are the organizational, regulatory a financial one.

2. INITIAL SITUATION

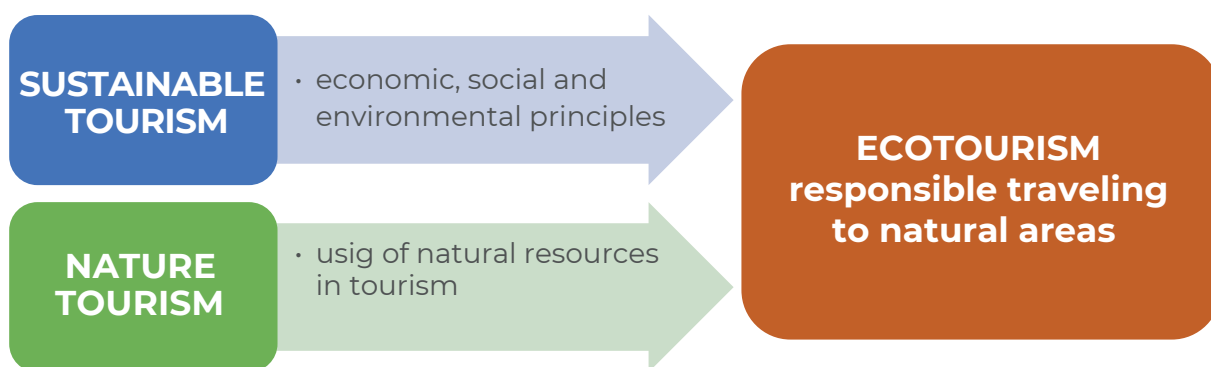
Ecotourism can be defined as responsible travel to natural areas, which cares about the environment and improves the living conditions of residents (TIES, 1990). Ecotourism develops in the natural environment and therefore affects nature tourism, which includes all forms of tourism (e.g. mass tourism, adventure tourism, alternative tourism) that use natural resources. Nature tourism includes any travel to visit the natural environment, while ecotourism should be based on the following principles:

- to minimize the negative impact of tourism on the environment,
- to create awareness of environmental and cultural values,
- to provide an authentic experience for visitors and residents,
- to provide direct financial support for the preservation of values / heritage,
- to support residents.

The natural environment has different meaning for different people. In urban destinations it is e.g. parks, which represent the natural environment used for recreation. In rural areas, are added parks, e.g. forests. Ecotourism can therefore be developed everywhere, whether in cities, in the countryside or even in protected areas.

Ecotourism, for example, geo tourism, cultural tourism and responsible tourism, are important components of sustainable tourism. **Sustainable tourism** can be defined as a broader term, encompassing and manifested in all types of tourism. The focus of sustainable tourism is not only on the protection of natural resources, but also on the economic and social balance of the environment in which it develops. Sustainable tourism thus takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental effects, meeting the needs of visitors, industry, the environment and residents (UNWTO, 2004). The sustainable development of tourism must not only ensure income from tourism (economic principle), respect natural resources (environmental principle), but also improve the quality of life of residents (social principle).

Defining the relationship between sustainable tourism, nature tourism and ecotourism



Compared to mass tourism, ecotourism offers tourists an exceptional experience. Tourists leave the destination offering ecotourism with the feeling that their visit has a positive impact on the local community as well as the environment. This is related to the fact that ecotourism has minimal or less negative effects on the environment, compared to other forms of tourism. Ecotourism is in conformity with the principles of sustainable tourism development and minimizes negative impacts on the environment. Residents are encouraged to preserve the fragile elements of the cultural environment, as well as local crafts and customs, ultimately benefiting not only the tourist, but also the local community with a growing quality of life. The aim is also to educate tourists about conservation and to obtain financial resources for ecological conservation.

In addition to the undeniable economic benefits and contribution to mitigating the negative impact on the environment, ecotourism also makes a significant contribution to the development of the socio-cultural environment. The positive benefits are seen from the point of view of the residents in the form of funding the schools and health facilities, improved access to drinking water, as well as support for community projects. These positive effects are significant, especially in developing countries. Approaches to the definition of ecotourism have changed over time.

Selected definitions of ecotourism

Source	Definitions
Ceballos-Lascurain (1987)	Travelling to relatively undamaged and unpolluted natural areas with the specific intention of educating, admiring and enjoying the natural scenery, wild fauna and flora, as well as the cultural heritage (past and present) of the destination.
Morgan (1999)	Ecologically sustainable tourism, which covers knowledge, appreciation of value and understanding of the importance of environmental and cultural environment.
The British Ecotourism Market UNWTO (2002)	<p>Ecotourism refers to forms of tourism that have the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all forms of tourism in the natural environment, where the motivation of visitors to observe and appreciate nature dominates, as well as traditional cultures, typical of the natural environment. - contain educational and interpretative elements. - mostly organized by specialized tour operators for small groups of visitors. - services are provided by micro and small enterprises owned by residents. - minimizes negative impacts on the natural and socio-cultural environment. - supports the maintenance of natural areas that are attractive in ecotourism through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · generating economic benefits for the local community, organizations and authorities that manage natural areas for conservation. · providing alternative employment opportunities and incomes for the local community. · raising awareness of the preservation of natural and cultural values for residents as well visitors.
The International Ecotourism Society (2015)	Responsible travelling into natural areas, which contributes to the protection of the natural environment, contributes to maintaining the quality of life of residents, involves interpretation and education, which includes providers of service and visitors.

Majority of definitions characterize ecotourism as an alternative form to mass tourism, which causes many dysfunctions. Foreign research studies confirm the growing interest in tourism in the natural environment, the growing environmental awareness of tourist. On the market is appearing a new, specific, but numerous and growing segment, which opens up new business opportunities.

Attributes of ecotourism

1. Behaviour typical for ecotourism is not limited to travelling. Values and principles intersect with everyday life, so we can say that ecotourism is a lifestyle.
2. Visitors in ecotourism are characterized by sensitivity to the issue of environmental protection and environmentally-conscious behaviour.
3. Tourism does not necessarily contribute to damage of the environment. On the contrary, it can make a measurable contribution to environmental protection.
4. Ecotourism brings benefits to all stakeholders (visitors, entrepreneurs, residents). Increasingly, these stakeholders are also more accessible to the arrival of larger organized groups of visitors to the destination, but some restrictions should be required.
5. Ecotourism is a relatively new research topic, the future direction of research should focus on: (1) identifying conditions and trends in the development of ecotourism, (2) analysing and description the behaviour and relationships among actors on the market.

Ecotourism in the conditions of Slovakia can be defined as a new product line, which brings new opportunities to appeal the modern market segment of visitors. By focusing on ecotourism, the Košice Region is gaining a competitive advantage on the market, because revenues from the sale of such oriented products are growing year-to-year as the society is aware of the consequences of insensitive human interventions in the natural environment. Examples are the numerous discussions on global warming and climate change. The message of these discussions is: "We need to start with each of us."

The solution is offered by holidays in protected areas, in rural areas or in historically and culturally attractive destinations with the motto "Enjoy experiences and protect values". Future generations must be taken into consideration in any activity in nature or in the historic city centre.

2.1. TRENDS IN ECOTOURISM

The focus on ecotourism in tourism destinations is supported by changes in consumer behaviour. The results of analytical studies focusing on consumer behaviour point to the fact that tourism services providers confirm the growing preference for environmentally friendly products. Internationally, there is a growing interest in tourism destinations with an extremely attractive natural environment (Costa Rica, South Africa, Galapagos, Peru, Belize and others). The results of sociological surveys also point to the fact, that the public expects, the providers of services will behave responsibly in the process of providing services. Thus, the pressure of public opinion on the environmental awareness of producers is growing. This issue is crucial in tourism destinations, whose attractiveness and competitiveness depend to a large extent on the degree of preservation of natural quality, diversity of fauna and flora, non-mass nature of tourist flows, also quality products focused on education, the development of the personality of the young generation with an emphasis on preserving values, interpretation of natural and cultural heritage and achieving experience. The application of the principles of social responsibility by stakeholders interested in the tourism development in the destination is therefore one of the important factors according to which potential visitors decide whether to visit the destination, or they will prefer competitive tourism destination. According to an international study (Nielsen Wire Survey, 2012), visitors prefer organizations that have implemented programs to support the local community (as part of the Corporate Social Responsibility program) and are willing to "pay more" for these goods and services. It means, that the decisive factor in the decision making process is the value orientation of the services provider, and not the price.

Experience and the opportunity to educate are main slogans (ITB, 2012), which characterize consumer behaviour in the second decade of the 21st century and emphasize the requirement for an individual and authentic travel experience. Tourism should also contribute to the elimination of barriers, it is necessary to invest in to the visitor of the future, while up to 10% of visitors have some form of disability, or health restriction. According to a foreign study (CMI Green Traveller Study, 2010), visitors in ecotourism are characterized by a higher travel intensity than the average visitor. Two thirds of these visitors make at least two trips during the year outside their place of residence, the one third of visitors make from five to eight trips per year. The motivation for them to participate in ecotourism is a sensitive perception of biodiversity, the support of a culture that values the environment, the importance of protecting endangered places, species and cultures.

2.1.1. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE FROM TOURISM DESTINATIONS WITH DEVELOPED ECOTOURISM

In this subchapter, selected examples from Slovenia and Switzerland were chosen. The choice of countries can be justified as follows. Slovenia is in many ways a comparable example for Slovakia in terms of potential for tourism development. This is also the reason why visitors (unknowing of geography) often mistake Slovenia with Slovakia. The population is comparable, and Slovenia represents an example of good practice for Slovakia in many aspects. Switzerland is often mentioned as a paradigmatic country in tourism development. The authors of the strategy are aware that Switzerland is at a different stage of development than Slovakia, which is reflected in the phase of the product life cycle, effective tourism policy, a sophisticated organizational and institutional framework as well as a stable funding system. It is clear that the framework conditions for development are incomparable, but it is the emphasis on sustainable development that has been the main philosophy for decades that forces us to set an example of this state and its regions.

SLOVENIA

Slovenia already has implemented an inspiring Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Growth for the period 2017-2021 developed at the national level. This strategic document emphasizes in a separate section the need to support small and medium-sized enterprises (simplification of administrative procedures and improvement of the business environment), which also dominate the tourism offer. The strategy also emphasizes intensive marketing, which is focused on key products and key markets, as well as the need for increasing effectiveness of communication tools. The vision of the state as a tourism destination stresses the “green orientation” which is defined as follows: “Slovenia has a clear vision. Slovenia will become a green, active and healthy tourism destination that provides a five-star experience.”

LJUBLJANA (smart city emphasizing sustainable development)

The capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana, is a metropolis “for people”. It is profiled with an orientation towards green and intelligent development of the tourism destinations. The process of transforming the capital as an example of sustainable development was initiated by its award “European Green Capital 2016”. The award was given by the European Commission for the measures implemented in the shortest time towards its sustainable development. Implementing changes that benefit residents as well as visitors would not be possible without expert examination, a clear vision, but also passionate personalities. Those who return to Ljubljana after years are amazed by its visible transformation, which has increased the quality of life in the city without decreasing the authenticity. On the contrary, the city is more attractive to visitors than ever before.

Ljubljana has sustainability as part of its DNA. The city was also historically recognizable because of its “green soul”. Several green initiatives have been implemented over the last decade, including green mobility, waste management and sustainable urban planning. Since 2012, motor vehicles have been excluded from the city centre, which has stimulated demand of residents for an alternative - bicycle transport. The popularity of city bikes is growing, which has also been supported by the bike sharing network. This system allows the rental of “city bikes” from self-service terminals in the wider city centre. Slovenia is one of the most cyclist-friendly cities in the world in recent years, and the scooters as an alternative form of transport, especially popular among the young generation and students, is gaining in popularity.

A popular means of transport, especially for seniors, disabled people, but also visitors, is the electric vehicle “Kavalir”, which slowly travels through the pedestrian precinct of the city. The city is also the leader in the number of city buses that use methane, which has helped reduce CO2 emissions.

Residents and visitors of the city also value the quality of drinking water, which reaches the parameters of groundwater without further addition of substances. The city has a large number of fountains and water mains with refreshing water.

Ljubljana is the first capital in Europe to announce a “zero waste” program, winning several international awards for its mobility strategy and the accessibility of public areas for people with reduced mobility. Therefore it is an example that is an inspiration for the metropolis of the East, Košice.

BOHINJ (region of local product and services)

The region of Bohinj is located in the northwest of Slovenia. Its administrative centre is town Bohinjska Bistrica and the main attraction is the Triglav National Park in the Julian Apples. What is typical for this scenic Slovenian region is the wide range of local products. Important part of local products are gastronomic specialties developed into details, with typical recipes of culinary specialties, which presents the brand Bohinj. Another separate group of certified products are the products of craftsmen - the diverse unique pieces of design. The certified offering also includes guide services (thematic guides that emphasize the authenticity and identity of the region), as well as the offer of accommodation facilities that bring a local atmosphere (e.g. farm accommodation, bike-friendly family guest house, apartment bee house, eco-hotel, etc.).

SOČA VALLEY (new tourism destination with comparable tourism attraction)

This destination is an authentic part of the Alps, which can be characterized as less developed for tourists and more affordable. Tourism sector grows about 20% every year. Two thirds of service providers are new stakeholders on the market, so they are relatively inexperienced. The tourism development in this destination is completely dependent on the quality of the natural environment, adherence to the values and principles of sustainable tourism development are crucial. The executive director of the Soča Valley Tourist Board has mentioned, that many years ago the Triglav National Park and visitors were in opposition, but now, they are allies and in partnership together fulfilling the goals of the strategy.

The main attention in sustainable development is focused on four areas: the Soča River, mobility, seasonality and the quality of provided services. Unsustainable on the Soča River is the high number of agencies offering water sports (kayaking, rafting, etc.), which are historically related to the image of the river. While 25 years ago there were only five such agencies, now there are about 70, which is unsustainable.

The second problem is mobility. They present themselves as a “green destination”, but 95% of visitors arrive by car. This caused traffic jams, a lack of car parks and a significant carbon footprint.

Seasonality means that 96% of demand is concentrated in the period from April to October. Because the most accommodation facilities are located in campsites and private accommodation and only 10% of beds are in hotels, it is difficult to ensure a yearly accommodation for tourists. The quality of services also causes problems. It is clear that the long-term competitiveness of a tourism destination cannot be based on mass character of tourism, which generates cost savings from economies of scale, but rather on

the quality of provided services. Supply-side stakeholders feel that this is right time to focus even more on the composition of products, the intensified involvement of regional products and the overall quality growth..

PODČETRTEK (truly working green tourism destination)

Podčetrtek is an example in Slovenia where “sustainability” really works. It is because of harmonized and consistent policy of development among stakeholders, the local community, the destination management organization, strong businesses as well as the small ones. This tourism destination also proves that success can only be achieved by joint efforts of stakeholders and stresses the importance of the trust of the stakeholders in the networking and in the activities of the destination management organization. Green mobility projects have been implemented in the region with the support of EU funds. The certification scheme for accommodation facilities corresponds to the identity of the tourism destination and emphasizes the existence of typical accommodation in rural areas (family farms, accommodation at the ZOO park, accommodation connected with a beekeeping course, etc.) The attention is also paid to promoting local crafts and traditional handmade products.

SWITZERLAND

Thanks to innovation and quality of services, Switzerland has been a leader in tourism in Europe since the 1970s. In the 1990s, due to the strong currency (Swiss Franc) and structural changes, there was a significant decline in overnight stays. Now we can see an increased demand for tourism in Switzerland from both, domestic and foreign visitors, because of implementation of several tourism reforms. Compared to Slovakia, Switzerland has a similar natural and cultural heritage, but in the tourism as well as the basic infrastructure Switzerland dominates. A quality business environment, well-built transport and tourism infrastructure, qualified staff and the environment maintenance increase the country's competitiveness in the tourism market. Several destinations can be an example in the development of ecotourism.

ZEERMATT (sustainable mountain destination)

Zermatt is a “self-sustaining” mountain destination in Switzerland, where the development of tourism is in harmony with nature. The destination's competitive advantage is based on unspoilt mountain scenery, the hospitality of the residents and the environment maintenance. There are several environmental problems associated with the development of road transport in Switzerland. For this reason, Zermatt decided to remain “motor less”. Cars are not allowed in the centre (they must remain in the parking place below the centre) and visitors can get to the centre by train or electric vehicle. The residents of Zermatt have voted in the referendum three times (1961, 1972 and 1986), the result of each referendum was to keep these restrictions.

However, sustainability in Zermatt is not just about transport. About 70% of electric power comes from hydroelectric power and most buildings and transport infrastructure are built with an emphasis on environmental sustainability. The willingness to develop this destination sustainably is rooted in the minds of residents and entrepreneurs. This can also be seen in the example of the destination management organization - the Zermatt Tourism, which does not create any restrictions on the tourism development, the decision to behave sustainably is the choice of the stakeholders. The latest project is the station of the new energy-efficient Matterhorn Glacier Ride cable car, which is equipped with an efficient

solar system, which is also the highest in Europe (3,821 metres above sea level). The tourism development supports the care of nature and the maintenance of resources in the way that future generations will benefit from it. This can be considered as the unique selling proposition (USP) of the destination.

ENGADIN SCUOL SAMNAUN (destination management organization supporting ecotourism)

Destination Engadin Scuol Samnaun is an example how a sustainable destination product can be developed with the support of a destination management organization. The competitive advantage of the destination is the combination of its natural and cultural heritage. The destination management organization Tourismus Engadin Scuol Samnaun Val Müstair AG (TESSVM) promotes only those products that protect the natural and cultural heritage of the destination and support the experience created from these values. TESSVM strives for uniformed capacity utilization throughout the year, which allows it to create stable jobs and sustain economic growth. The destination management organization's activities support the maintenance of resources, protect the climate and contribute to social justice. The organization also annually supports the volunteer campaign focused on garbage collecting in the destination.

Examples of good practice are destination products focused on sustainable mobility. This includes, for example, the cooperation of destination management organization, accommodation facilities and transport companies. If the visitor stays at least one night in the destination during the summer season, he can use free transport by bus or train, or a 50% discount on cable cars. A similar example is the Culture Bus, which allows visitors to take part in cultural events without having to use a car for transport. The destination management organization, together with the national park, also offer visitors the opportunity to rent an electric BMWi3 car, thus raising awareness of e-mobility and enabling emissions-free travel within the destination.

Based on case studies from Slovenia and Switzerland, as well as other countries with developed tourism (Spain, Austria and others), we can generalize the recommendations that need to be taken into consideration in ecotourism development in the tourism destination.

Recommendations based on the examples of good practice in the ecotourism development of the region

Based on the examples of good practice from countries with developed ecotourism, it is possible to identify 24 recommendations that should guide regions focusing on ecotourism. The order of the recommendations does not indicate their importance, nor do we consider the list to be „exhaustive“.

Aspects related to socio-economic impacts:

1. Support of tourism focused on community based tourism as a preferred form of ecotourism.
2. Reduce the dependence of the local community on ecotourism (financial dependence).
3. Support for partnerships with multidisciplinary involvement of experts who will be integrated in all phases of the implementation of the ecotourism development

-
- strategy in the region.
- Promoting partnerships among ecotourism development projects, environmentally friendly projects and socially responsible businesses.
 - Supporting the idea of „environmental networking“ among all stakeholders, from decision-makers to visitors, through environmental education and integrated planning of all ecotourism activities.
 - To support the national accreditation of tourism in natural areas on the basis of international standards, respecting the uniqueness of each region.

Raising awareness of conservation / preservation of natural heritage in relation to ecotourism:

- Continuous monitoring of the environment, with experts in environmental studies, always with a holistic perception of ecosystem systems and processes.
- Monitoring of biological multi criteria indicators in monitoring the impact on the natural environment.
- Implementation of exact studies focused on psychology, behaviour, reproductive system and presence before and after the use of foreign elements (e.g. the occurrence of new species of fauna and flora) in the natural environment.
- Use of knowledge about animal psychology, reaction and development of ecosystems in the process of planning ecotourism activities.
- To stimulate research on the natural conservation of exceptional species of fauna and flora occurring in protected areas.
- Data collection focused on the number of visitors in the area with the aim to identify the current level of demand as a basis for the creation of strategic materials and for decision-making processes.
- Realize the sociological surveys in order to evaluate how individual ecotourism activities contribute to raising the awareness of visitors and contribute to their involvement in the protection of the natural environment.

Aspects related to sustainability of the number of animal species

- Providing environmental education services to ecotourists also with the tourist guides.
- Formulating clear rules for the entry of visitors into the ecotourism area, more or less restrictive with regard to the season, the degree of protection, the sensitivity of species and the environment to human intervention.
- Restriction of physical contact to wild animals.
- Elimination of feeding animals especially with unsuitable food.
- Prioritize the use of non-invasive techniques in the research and monitoring of the fauna and flora of protected areas, as well as regions where ecotourism is developing.
- Implementing effective practices to prevent biological invasion and disease transmission.
- Implementing effective practices to prevent environmental pollution, including noise and light pollution.
- Ecotourism infrastructure, located in a clearly defined and limited area, in order to maximize the undeveloped and natural environment.

22. Plan and manage the network of road transport (roads, railways) to minimize the risk of collisions with other means of transport, visitors and animals.

Context dependency of best practices

23. Examples of best practices should be adapted to the specific conditions of the environmental, geographical and sociological context.
24. Examples of best practices should be adapted to the latest knowledge as well as the formation of new environmental threats.

2.1.2. THE PROFILE OF VISITOR IN ECOTOURISM

To identify the profile of a visitor in ecotourism we benefited from the international studies and professional sources published in countries with developed ecotourism. Based on the classification of the profile of the ecotourist according to age, education and income, as well as other socio-demographic characteristics, we can characterize **the ecotourist as a visitor with higher education, higher income and longer length of stay** in tourism destination compared to other types of visitors. These mentioned characteristics are also confirmed by the results of field researches carried out in conditions such as Ecuador, Canada, Costa Rica, Peru, Australia, East Africa and other destinations (Fennell, 2015).

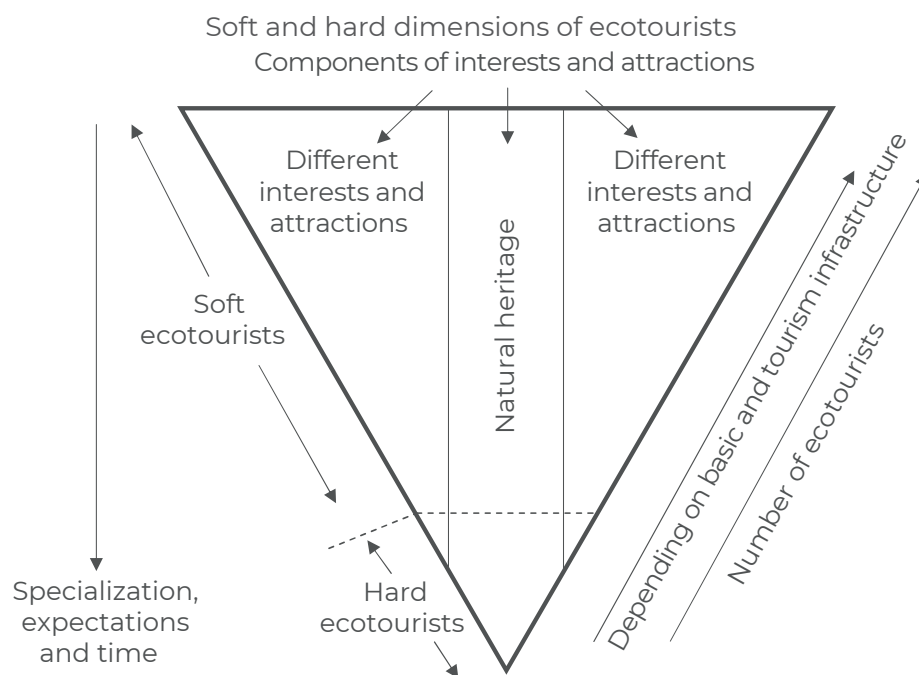
If we compare the preferences of ecotourists vs. “traditional tourist”, we can say that the expected benefits perceived by ecotourists are mainly in new, active and experiential forms of activities, which are contrary to the expectations of “traditional tourists”, who are more passive and their expectations are mainly connected with activities family. Ecotourists were mainly looking for outdoor activities (in the wild nature, parks, protected areas and in the countryside), while the traditional tourist tends more towards cities and typical resorts. The fundamental difference between ecotourists and traditional visitors are their preferences, motivation and expected benefits from travelling. **The ecotourist as active, while the traditional tourist is rather a passive recipient and consumer of a product of mass tourism** (Fennell and Smale, 1992).

Expectations and activities of an ecotourist and a traditional visitor

Expectationsof ecotourist :	Expectationsof traditional tourist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trying a new lifestyle - Tasting of new cuisine - Be physically active - Visit historical sites - See and experience as much as possible - Get as many new stimuli as possible - Meet people with similar interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watching sports - Visiting friends - Idleness - Be together as a family - Return to the „good old days“ - Visiting places where my family originates - Feel in destination like at home - Have fun and be entertained
Prefer attractions of ecotourist:	Prefer attractions of traditional tourist

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wild nature - National parks and protected areas - Rural areas - Mountains - Lakes and bodies of water - Historical monuments - Cultural events - Coast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indoor sports - Amusement and theme parks - Nightlife and entertainment - Gambling - Shopping - Swimming and sunbathing on the beaches - Theatre and live music production
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When identifying the profile of the ecotourists, the difference between the soft and hard ecotourist is significant.



Source: Fennel (2015)

Soft ecotourists according to research, are the most numerous group of ecotourists, spend a lot of time on common activities outside the natural environment. They consume goods and services in destinations, just like common tourists. They spend on culture, shopping, adventure, theme parks, etc. They are depended on tourism infrastructure and services and are characterized by lower degree of specialization of interests. On the opposite side of the axis are hard ecotourists, who are characterized by more specialized interests, less dependence on tourism infrastructure and services, and are less numerous, too.

According to foreign studies, motivational factors stimulating ecotourists to visit ecotourism destinations can be in different order.

Behaviour of ecotourist – case studies

Case study from Hard-core Ecotourists in Lamington National Park in Australia, presents the profile of ecotourist based on primary research on the sample of 1 180 visitors (visitors accommodated in eco-facilities in Lamington National Park). As a result of cluster analyses, the typical characteristics of ecotourist are:

1. Observation of **nature** in its original and undisturbed form.
2. The ideal conception of an ecotourism destination is **wildlife**.
3. Preference for destinations which accessibility is difficult, in remote locations.
4. Opportunity **to learn about the natural environment** in which ecotourists are.
5. Try to find out as much as possible about **the natural environment** before travelling
6. The experience in ecotourism should be mental enrichment.
7. Preference for destinations that offer an interpretation of **natural heritage**.
8. Effort to ensure that the destination is in „better conditions“ after the departure of the visitors than before their arrival.
9. The quality of the natural environment plays a key role in choosing a destination, it is a more important factor compared to the quality of accommodation.
10. Efforts to support the local economy.
11. Support (including fund-raising campaigns) for attractions in ecotourism such as National Parks.
12. Participation in voluntary activities such as maintenance, cleaning and marking of trails, etc.
13. Preference for destinations that are less visited.
14. Willingness to take a long hike even in bad weather, if it was a unique opportunity to see a rare plant or animal.
15. Trying to visit as many ecotourism destinations as possible during one's lifetime.
16. Contact with the natural environment can be described as intensely spiritual.
17. The pleasure of talking about one's own ecotourism experience.
18. If the visitor likes the ecotourism, he tries to return as often as possible.
19. Meeting visitors with similar preferences.
20. While travelling, visitors try to rely as much as possible on their own strength.
21. Preference for physically demanding and partly risky ecotourism experiences.
22. Trying to impress family and friends when choosing a destination.

The Canadian case study (Galloway In Carvajal, 2013) stresses segmentation of visitors of protected areas in Ontario, Canada. The size of the research sample was 9,495 visitors. The respondents are looking for natural areas mainly because of:

- recharge their batteries in the natural environment,
- reduction of stress,
- escape from noise and masses of people in big cities, searching for physical strain,
- outdoor education,
- meeting people with the same interests, but also a certain degree of risk,
- independence and spirituality.

Based on this study, it is possible to differentiate between (1) stress-relieving visitors, (2) active nature lovers, and (3) adventure-seeking visitors.

In summary, we state that it is mainly about contact and education in the natural environment. Tourists are attracted by observation, education, trying out new activities, which ultimately leads to understanding and respect for natural laws. It includes a touch with a new type of lifestyle. The most important stimulus is the return to nature. Nature provides an unusual framework for educational activities aimed at different age groups, as well as exploring protected areas. As potential barriers connected with travel to ecotourism destinations, there is a certain level of risk that potential tourists will evaluate as acceptable / or

unbearable, but also financial risks, lack of information and inhomogeneous promotion, which would emphasize the specifics of individual offers. Ecotourist can be described as “socially responsible”, because their consumer behaviour brings a positive change for the economic, socio-cultural and natural environment in the tourism destination.

Segmentation of ecotourists according to academics

The first academic debates about the segmentation of ecotourists can be found in the literature in the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties. Kusler (1991) argued that ecotourists can be classified into one of the following three categories.

1. Do it yourself ecotourist“ includes the largest group of ecotourists who choose different types of accommodation and a high degree of mobility and flexibility when visiting attractions.
2. Ecotourist on tour require perfect organization of their trips, they like to travel to exotic destinations (e.g. Antarctica).
3. School groups, scientific groups are characterized by a readiness to be included in scientific research, which requires a longer stay in the destination often under „harsher“ conditions compared to the first two types of ecotourists.

In his research, Lindberg (1991) emphasizes the importance of commitment and time as functions to define the types of ecotourists, including the required expected experience of where they wish to travel, and how they will travel. In his research, he identified four basic typologies of ecotourists:

1. Hard-core nature tourists: scientific researchers, or groups with a specific educational purpose.
2. Dedicated nature tourists: people who visit protected areas in order to understand the natural and cultural heritage.
3. Mainstream nature tourists: people visiting the Amazon, the gorilla park in Rwanda, or other destinations for an unusual experience.
4. Casual nature tourists: persons who accidentally visit natural heritage as part of a more broadly designed stay.

The Mowforth classification (1993) takes into account the criteria of age, type of stay, way of organizing the stay and budget. He distinguishes the three types of ecotourists:

1. Rough ecotourist: young people, also the middle-aged generation, who travel individually or in small groups, they are independent, prefer low-cost travel, are looking for sports opportunities and adventure.
2. Smooth ecotourist: the middle age visitors to the older generations, prefer to travel in groups, are dependent on tour operators, have a higher budget, seek nature and safari.
3. Specialist ecotourist: age-free, travel individually, are independent and reliable in groups of specialists, have a medium to high budget and their interest is determined by the scientific orientation to avocation.

Beaumont (2011) stressed three criteria based on a field research conducted on domestic and foreign ecotourists in Lamington National Park in Australia. Connection with nature in the behaviour of ecotourists, educational aspect and sustainability

1. If all three criteria are met, he speaks about Complete ecotourists,
2. If two criteria are met, he speaks about Strong ecotourist,
3. If all three criteria are met, he speaks about Peripheral ecotourist.

He concluded that while the natural environment and educational opportunities are essential for the demand in ecotourism, the criterion of sustainability is not a more significant factor influencing the decisions of ecotourists compared to mainstream. Sustainability is not only characteristic of ecotourism, but also applies to other types of tourism, as well as accommodation, catering, transport services and attractions, their planning, development and management.

The identified trends of ecotourism result in several recommendations for the development of ecotourism. In order to destination management organizations (DMOs), in Slovak conditions local and regional destination management organizations, to properly set up their

functioning, it is not enough for them to play only a role a marketing agency. Their important role should be implementation of internal marketing and networking of stakeholders from all sectors (private, public, non-profit) as well as across different economic sectors. Destination management organizations in Slovakia are limited by geographical territories, the stakeholders in the destination do not cooperate sufficiently across various sectors, and residents are not “involved” in the tourism development, which is in contrary to successful destinations in ecotourism. However, destination management organizations can create their own certification schemes that will support local concepts and the identity of destination (regional brand, quality brand for accommodation facilities, traditional products and crafts). It is necessary to set the environment for business activities motivating new stakeholders to enter to the industry. As is evident from the presented case studies, the profile of the ecotourist fits these requirements, they are mostly **educated visitors who stay in the destination longer and realize higher consumption expenses** compared to the average visitor.

2.2. RESOURCES AND PRODUCTS OF ECOTOURISM

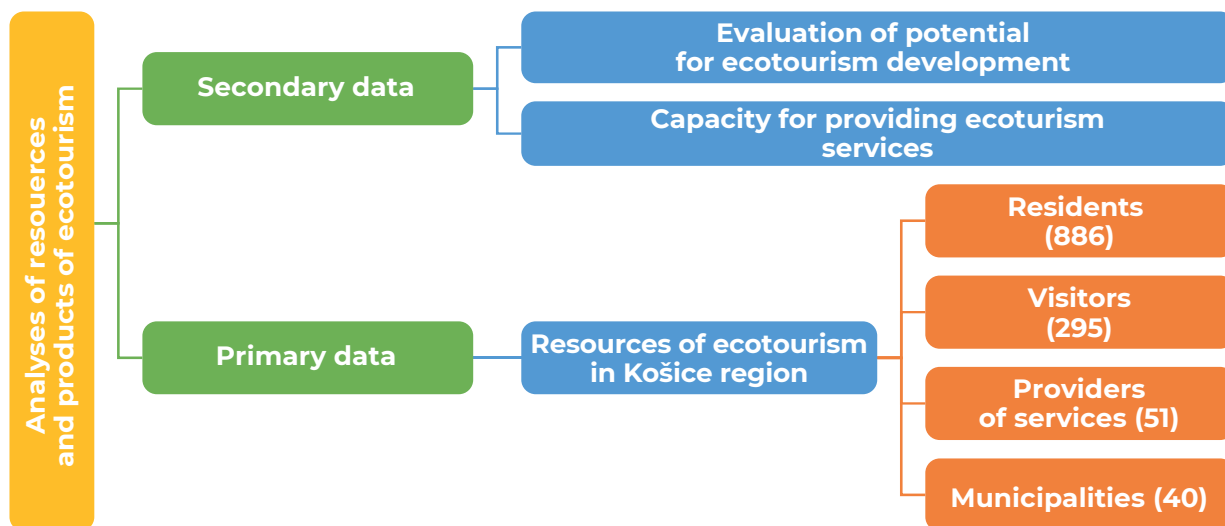
The natural environment can be considered as a key value, which is also taken into account in the *Národná stratégia ochrany biodiverzity pre roky 2012 -2020 / National Biodiversity Protection Strategy 2012-2020*. One of the aims of the strategy is to map and evaluate ecosystem services that value the importance of natural resources, functions of the ecosystems, and the services that nature provides to humans. For this reason, when evaluating the resources and products of ecotourism in the Košice Region, we focus on evaluating the potential of the destination for the ecotourism development and evaluating the ecosystem services, according to which the future possibilities for the development can be suggested.

The presented analysis of resources and products of ecotourism in the Košice Region is based on secondary and primary data. To evaluate the potential of the district of the Košice Region, were used data from the *Climate Atlas of the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute* and the database of the *Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic*. The *Catalogue of Ecosystem Services of Slovakia* (Mederly, Černický et al., 2019) is used to evaluate the capacity of the region for the providing of ecosystem services in tourism.

Primary data are used to identify resources of ecotourism in the Košice Region. To collect primary data a questionnaire survey among stakeholders was used. We classified the stakeholders involved into ecotourism development in the Košice Region into four categories:

- residents,
- visitors / tourists,
- providers of services (accommodation, hospitality, sports and recreational facilities),
- municipalities.

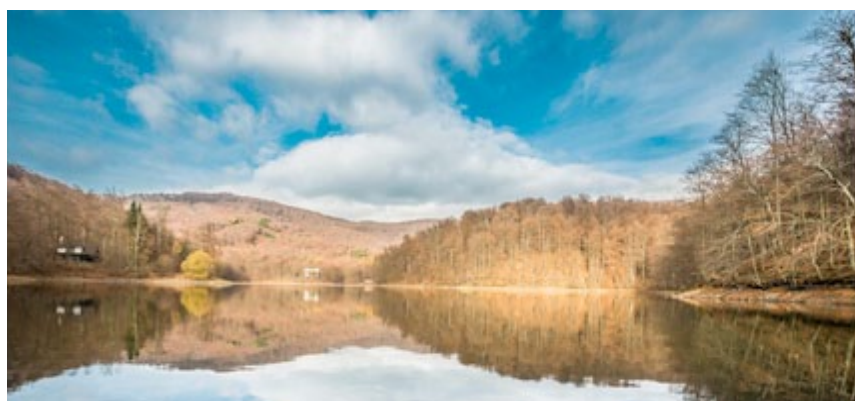
A separate questionnaire was prepared for each category. The questionnaires were distributed from September to November 2019 personally and via e-mail. We assumed 1,272 questionnaires, 886 from residents, 295 from visitors (11 from foreign visitors), 51 from providers of service, and 40 from local self-governments in the Košice Region. Because the selection of respondents was a random and the number of questionnaires is sufficient in all four categories, the research sample can be considered as representative.



From resources of ecotourism in the Košice Region, we present an evaluation of the region's potential for the development of ecotourism, the capacity of the region for providing ecosystem services in tourism and then evaluate the attitudes of stakeholders on ecosystem services. These information are the basis for identifying opportunities for development of the region. Based on the identified high potential for the development of ecotourism, the economic, social and environmental effects of tourism in the region are subsequently evaluated. The analysis is concluded with the identification of weaknesses/ shortcomings of the tourism development within the particular destinations.

The data represent the whole Košice Region. Due to the size of the territory and regional characteristics of tourism development, the data are also processed for single tourism destinations in the Košice Region in the form of destination cards. Based on similar tourism offer (natural and cultural-historical heritage of the region), visitor flows, and the current regional division of destination management organizations, the following tourism destinations were identified: Slovenský raj, Gemer, Spiš, Košice and surroundings, Dolný Zemplín and Tokaj

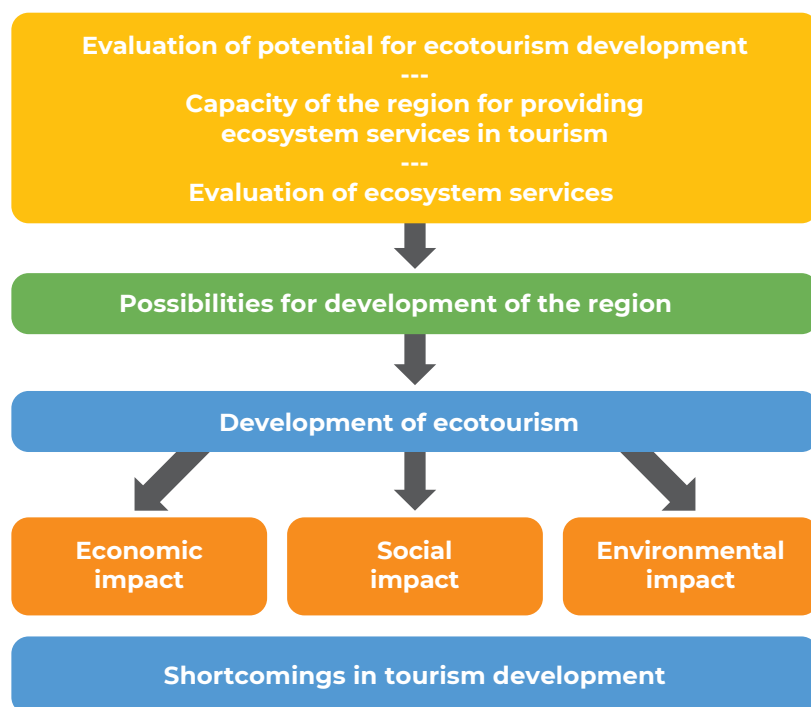
Regional differentiation of tourism destinations in Košice region from managerial point of view



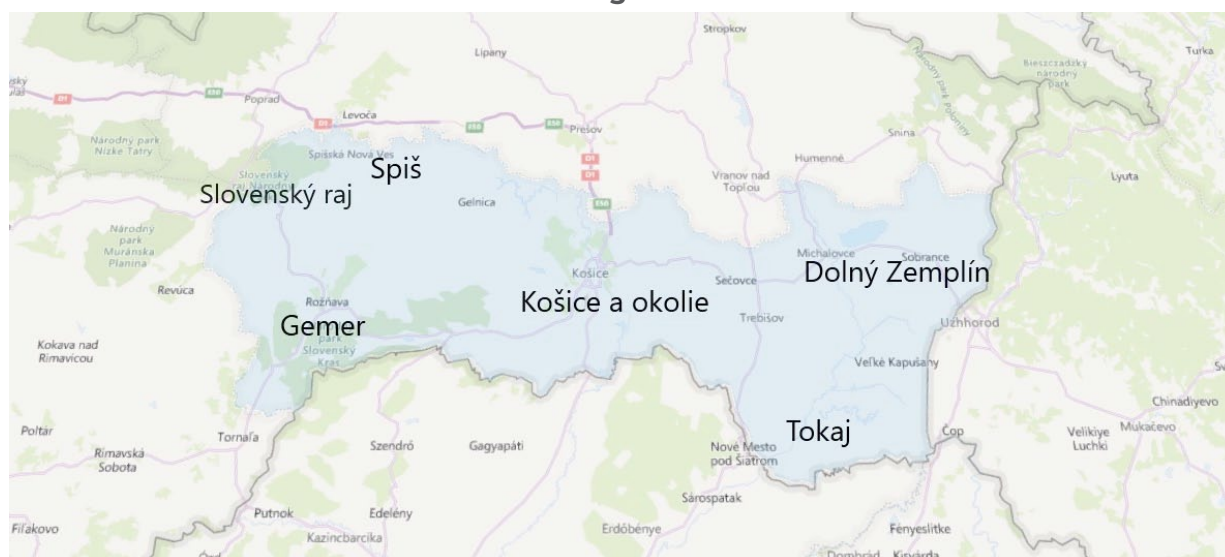
Source: www.kosiceregion.com

- Spiš a Slovenský raj
- Gemer
- Košice
- Dolný Zemplín
- Tokaj

The process of methodological assesment of resources and products of ecotourism in Košice Region



Classification of Košice region into tourism destinations



2.2.1. POTENTIAL OF KOŠICA REGION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECOTOURISM

Destination potential for the development of ecotourism can be evaluated based on several criteria. The ecotourism uses natural resources, which are determined by weather and climate. Therefore, the first set of criteria consists of climate conditions. The second part contains environmental aesthetics, which includes relief, water and vegetation. The last set of criteria includes tourism infrastructures. To evaluate the potential of the area, we use a 5-points rating scale. Each indicator is evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 - not suitable, 5 - most favourable).

**Criteria for the evaluation of the destination potential
for the development of ecotourism**


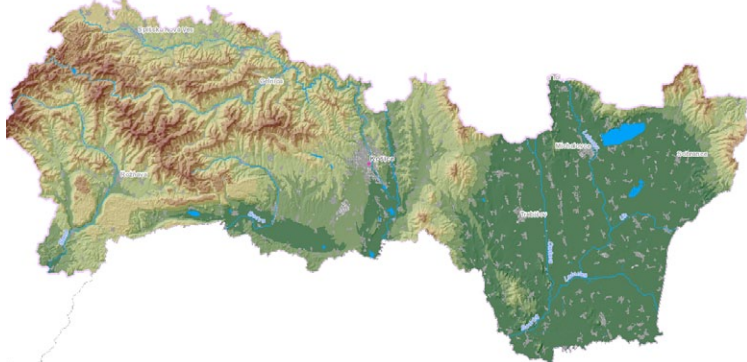
Indicator/Evaluation	1	2	3	4	5
Climate conditions					
Number of frost days per year	<70	70 - 90	90 - 105	105 - 120	>120
Number of days with temperature $t > 10^{\circ}\text{C}$	<40	40 - 100	100 - 140	140 - 160	>160
Number of precipitation days	>180	140 - 180	120 - 140	100 - 120	<100
Average summer temperature ($^{\circ}\text{C}$)	$\geq 21,6$ $\leq 17,4$	21,1 - 21,5 17,9 - 17,5	20,6 - 21 18,4 - 18,0	20-1-20,5 18,9 - 18,5	19 - 20
Overall description	Suitable conditions for 1-2 months: short cold summers and long winters, or hot summers and winters without snow	Suitable conditions up to 3 months: hot dry summers, unstable winters with little snow	Suitable conditions for 3-6.5 months: cold rainy summers and mild winters with unstable snow cover or hot dry summers and cold winters	Suitable conditions for 7-9 months: hot dry summers and mild winters with stable snow cover	Suitable conditions for 9.5-10.5 months: hot summers and mildly cold winters with stable snow cover or long hot summers and short mild winters without stable snow cover
Relief					
Average altitude	1000 - 2500	2500	0 - 100	100 - 400	700 - 1000
Country type	Alpine	Alpine	Flat	Hilly, low mountain	The average mountain
Water conditions					
Hydrological type	-	Stream or source	Major rivers	Rivers and lakes	Rivers, lakes, waterfalls
Vegetation					
Vegetation type	Desert	Steppe	Meadow	Forest	Forest and steppe
Infrastructure					
Tourism infrastructure	None	Undeveloped	Slightly developed	Developed	Developed and diverse

Source: Proceed based on Radomska, Kolotylo, 2019

The overall ecotourism potential of the Košice Region can be expressed based on the assigned points. Suitability of the destination for the development of ecotourism: 40-50 = excellent conditions, 30-39 = good conditions, 20-29 = satisfactory conditions, <19 = insufficient conditions. Based on data from the Climate Atlas of the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute and the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, we evaluate the potential of the Košice Region for the development of ecotourism.

The potential of the Košice Region for the development of ecotourism

Climate conditions		Score
Number of frost days		4
Number of days with temperature > 10 °C		5
Number of precipitation days		5
Average summer temperature (°C)		5

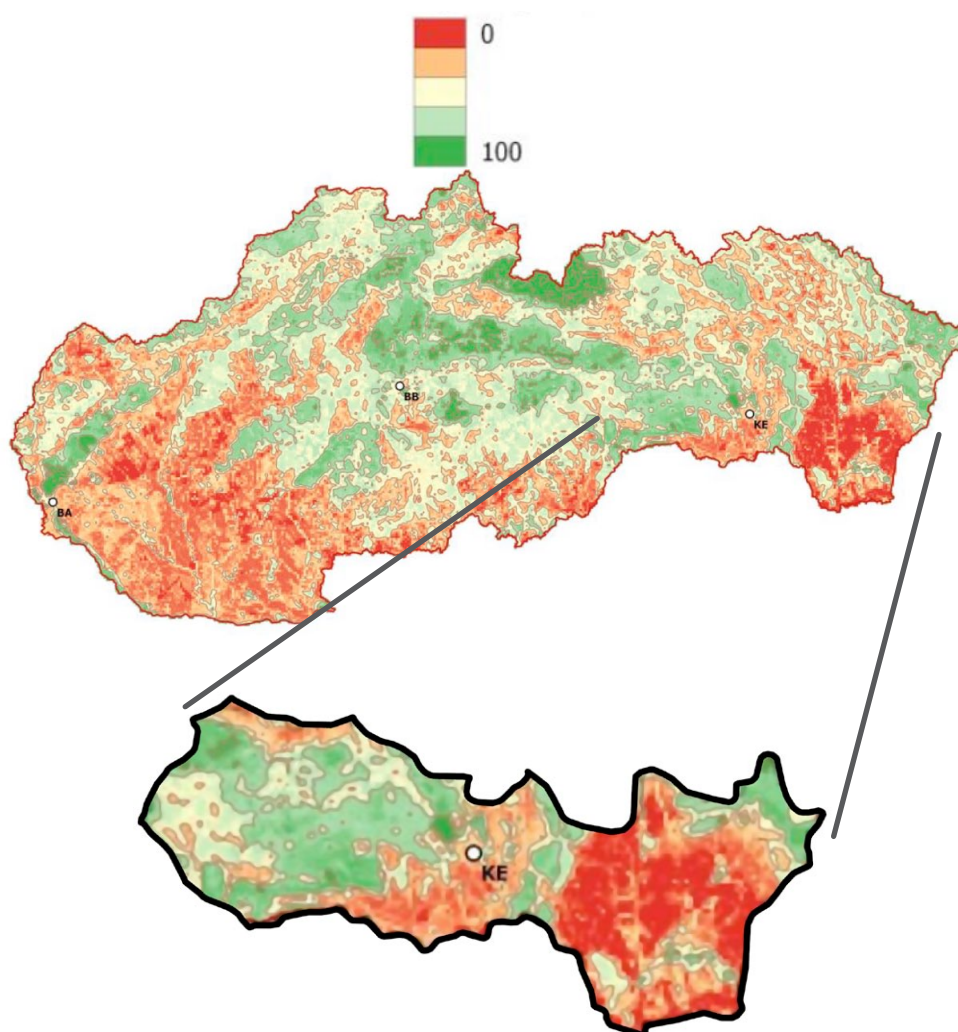
Qualitative description	<p>The Košice Region belongs to the northern temperate zone with average annual temperatures around 10 ° C. The northern part of the territory belongs to a moderately warm climate area. The south and southeast belong to a warm climate area.</p>	5
Relief		
Average altitude		4
Country type	<p>In the Košice Region, there are two national parks (Slovak Paradise, Slovak Karst), two protected landscape areas and 140 small-protected areas (PLAs) of which 40 are national nature reserves, 47 nature reserves, 23 national natural monuments, 18 natural monuments and 6 protected areas.</p>	4
Water conditions		
Hydrological type		5
Vegetation		
Vegetation type	<p>Forests cover two-fifths of the region's surface. They are located mainly in the mountain and foothill areas in the northern and southwestern part of the region. In the southeast part, there are floodplain forests, the eastern and southern part has a lowland character and agricultural land predominates here.</p>	5
Infrastructure		
Tourism infrastructure	<p>The tourism infrastructure in the Košice region is developed. There are mainly hotels (54 hotels with 4,305 beds), pensions (74 pensions with 1,808 beds) and campsites (10 campsites with 8,491 beds). Hospitality services are concentrated mainly in larger municipalities. There are 10 ski resorts of mostly regional importance (with 39 lifts and 2 cable cars). Currently, 1,416 kilometres of cycling routes are marked in the region.</p>	4

Based on the results (46 points), the Košice Region has excellent prerequisites for the development of ecotourism. Ecotourism should be developed in line with ecosystem services. For this reason, we also evaluate the capacity of the destination to provide tourism ecosystem services.

2.2.2. CAPACITY OF THE KOŠICE REGION TO OFFER TOURISM ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Ecosystem services represent the direct and indirect contributions of ecosystems to human well-being (TEEB, 2010). Considering those when planning ecotourism, it is necessary to consider and appreciate the importance of natural resources, their functions and the services that nature provides to people in specific areas. The ecosystem services include supply services, regulatory and support services, and cultural services. Tourism belongs to the cultural services, where people choose an area to spend their free time based on the character of the natural environment and cultivated landscape (Mederly & Černecký et al., 2019).

The evaluation of the Košice Region capacity for the ecosystem services - tourism



Source: Catalogue of Ecosystem Services of Slovakia

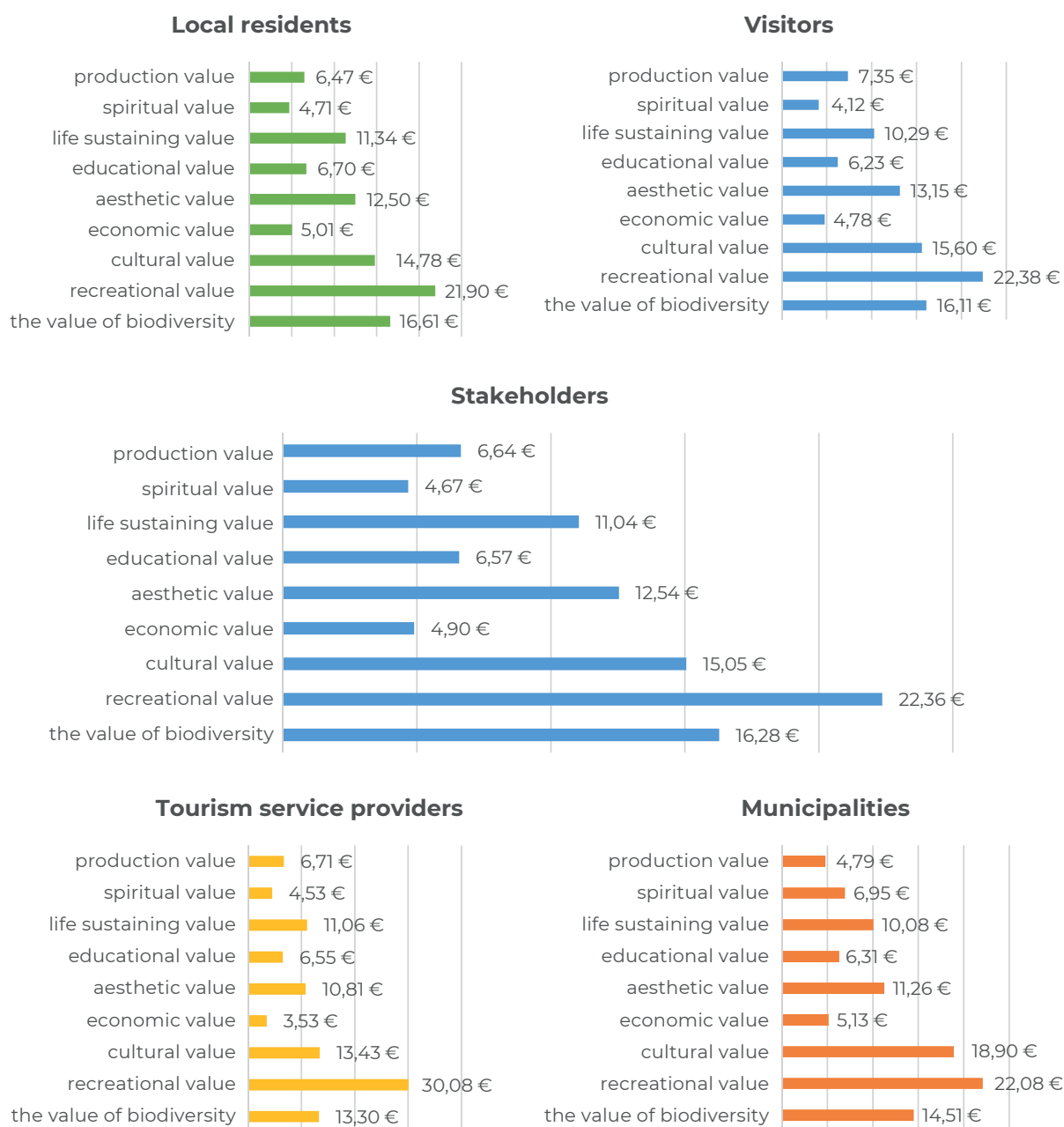
To evaluate the tourism ecosystem services, it is appropriate to identify areas that provide good conditions for the development of tourism. Furthermore, it is important to take into account territorial and species protection, as well as other environmental limits and negative factors (e.g. mining areas, polluted air and water, noise). When evaluating the capacity of the area for the tourism ecosystem services in Slovakia, it is possible to see that the best values are typical for mountain destinations and destinations near water sources and reservoirs. The lowest values are typical for lowlands and basins.

In terms of evaluating the capacity of the Košice Region for the tourism ecosystem services, the destinations of the Slovak Paradise, Gemer, Dolný Zemplín and part of the destination Tokaj (Interbodrogan area) have the most favourable values.



2.2.3. EVALUATION OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN KOŠICE REGION

When evaluating the ecosystem services, stakeholders had to distribute €100 among the nine most important ecosystem functions.



Stakeholders evaluated as the highest the recreational value (EUR 22.36), biodiversity value (EUR 16.28) and cultural value (EUR 15.05). The evaluation of ecosystem services shows that there is a high potential for the development of tourism in the Košice Region (recreational and cultural value) in a sustainable way (biodiversity value).

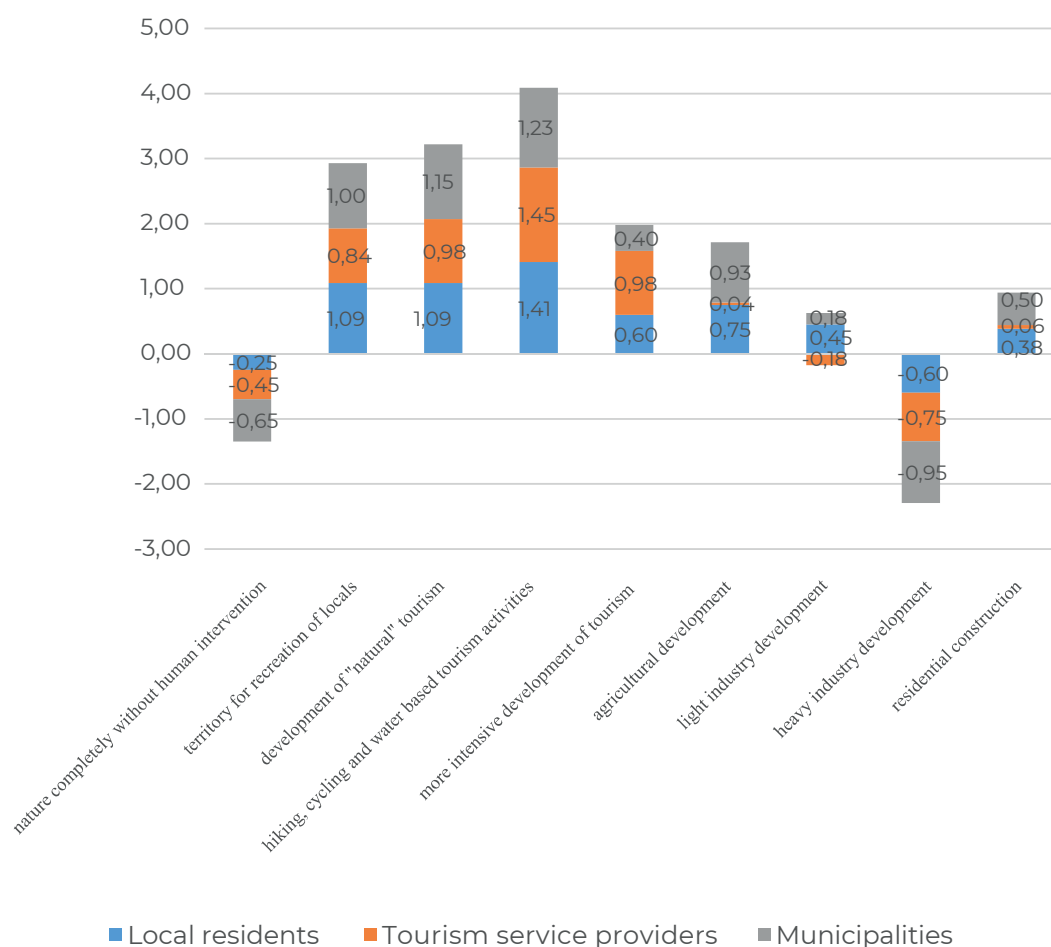
2.2.4. POSSIBILITIES OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE KOŠICE REGION

Based on the potential of the region for tourism, we examined how tourism in this territory should be developed, or what other possibilities for the development of the region are suitable according to the opinion of different stakeholders.

Local residents, tourism service providers and municipalities

Residents, tourism service providers and municipalities were asked to evaluate the possibilities of region development on a scale of -2 to 2 (-2 strongly disagree, 2 strongly agree).

Possibilities of development of the Košice Region from the residents, tourism service providers and local municipalities point of view

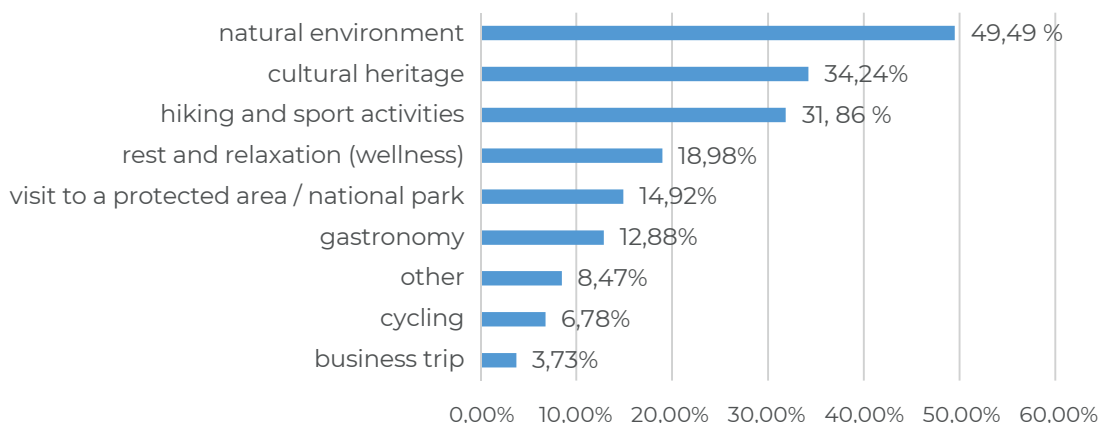


As a result, the stakeholders agreed with the development of hiking tourism, cycling and water-based tourism activities, as well as the development of natural tourism. Some stakeholders also indicate that the area should be left for the recreation of locals.

Visitors

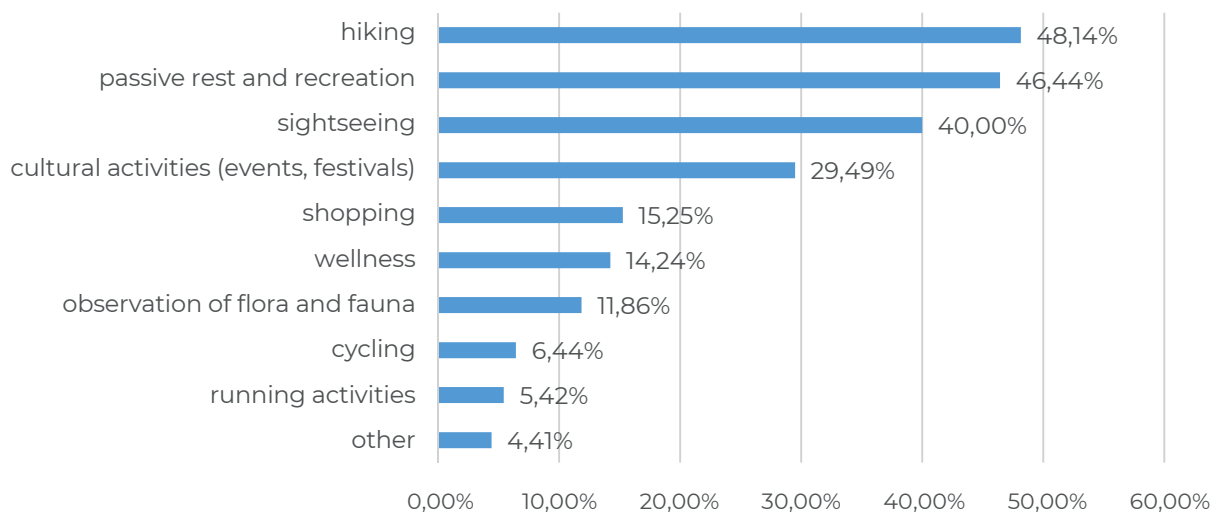
Visitors come to the Košice Region mainly because of the interest in the natural environment (49.49%), cultural heritage (34.24%), hiking and sports activities (31.86%).

Reasons for visiting Košice Region



Visitors most often engage in hiking (48.14%), passive rest and recreation (46.44%), sightseeing (40.00%) and participate in cultural activities (29.49%).

Activities performed in the destination



Based on the opinions of residents, tourism service providers and municipalities and at the same time, taking into account the motivation of visitors and their activities, it can be concluded that the development of ecotourism is a suitable option for the development of the Košice Region. Tourism, which, given its economic, social and environmental effects, is developing sustainably.

2.2.5. TOURISM IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KOŠICE REGION

Economic impact of tourism

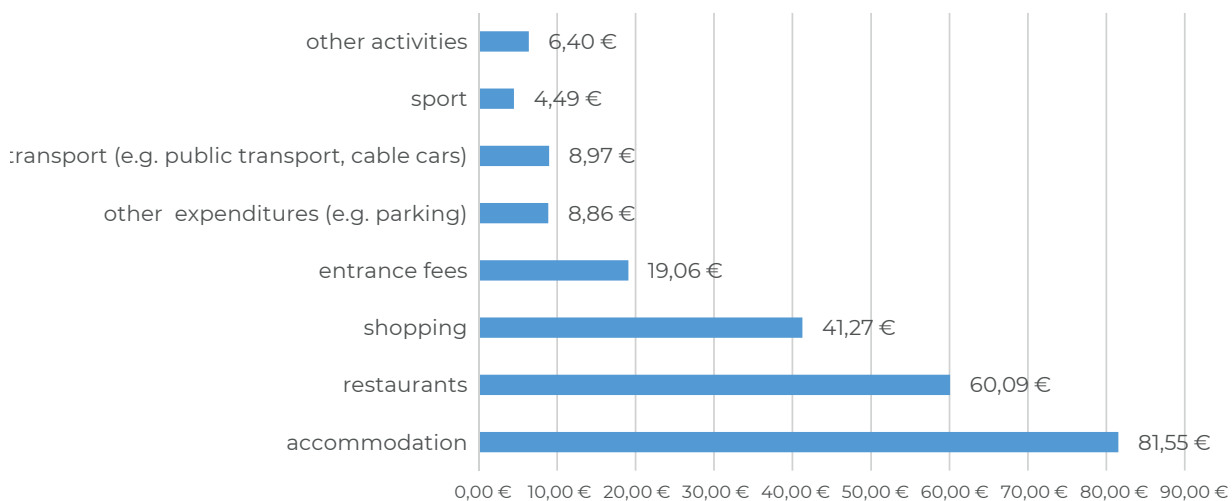
With a focus on the economic effects of tourism, we evaluate the average length of stay of visitors in the Košice Region, as well as their expenditures during the trip.

The average length of stay of a visitor is 3.75 days.

Average expenditure per visitor is 61.55 EUR; the average expenditure per tourist trip is 230.70 EUR,

Visitors spend the most money on accommodation (EUR 81.55), restaurants (EUR 60.09) and shopping (EUR 41.27).

Average expenditure per tourist trip

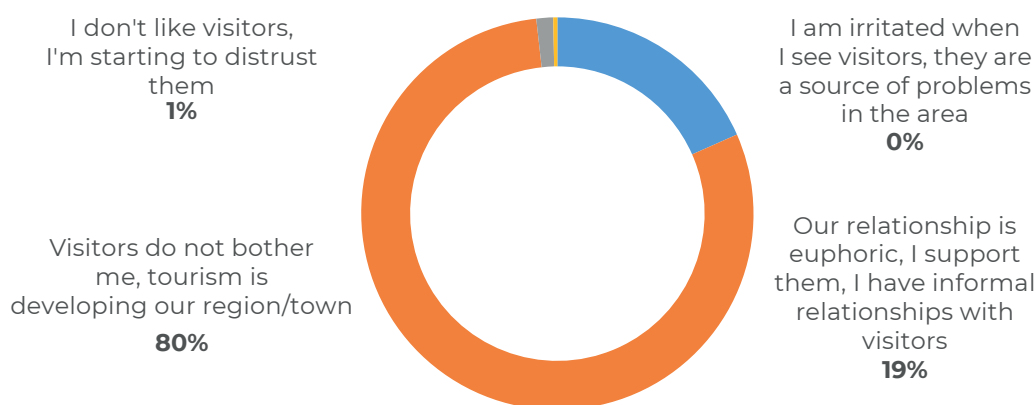


Social impact of tourism

When evaluating the social impacts of tourism, it is necessary to focus on the relationship between residents and visitors, as well as visitors' satisfaction with tourism services.

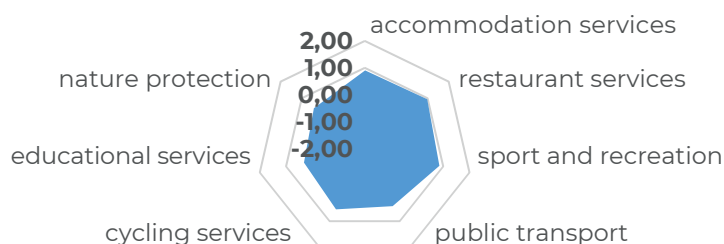
From the social perspective, the attitude of the locals towards the visitors is positive. Almost 80 % of residents do not mind visitors, because they perceive tourism as a factor of development of their region or municipality. Some locals (18.40%) have a euphoric relationship with visitors and maintain informal relationships with them.

Relationship between residents and visitors



The visitors have a positive perception of the tourism services in the Košice Region. On a scale of -2 to 2 (-2 very dissatisfied, 2 very satisfied), visitors rated their satisfaction. The visitors' satisfaction with all the examined services is positive. They are mostly satisfied with the restaurant, accommodation, sport and recreational services.

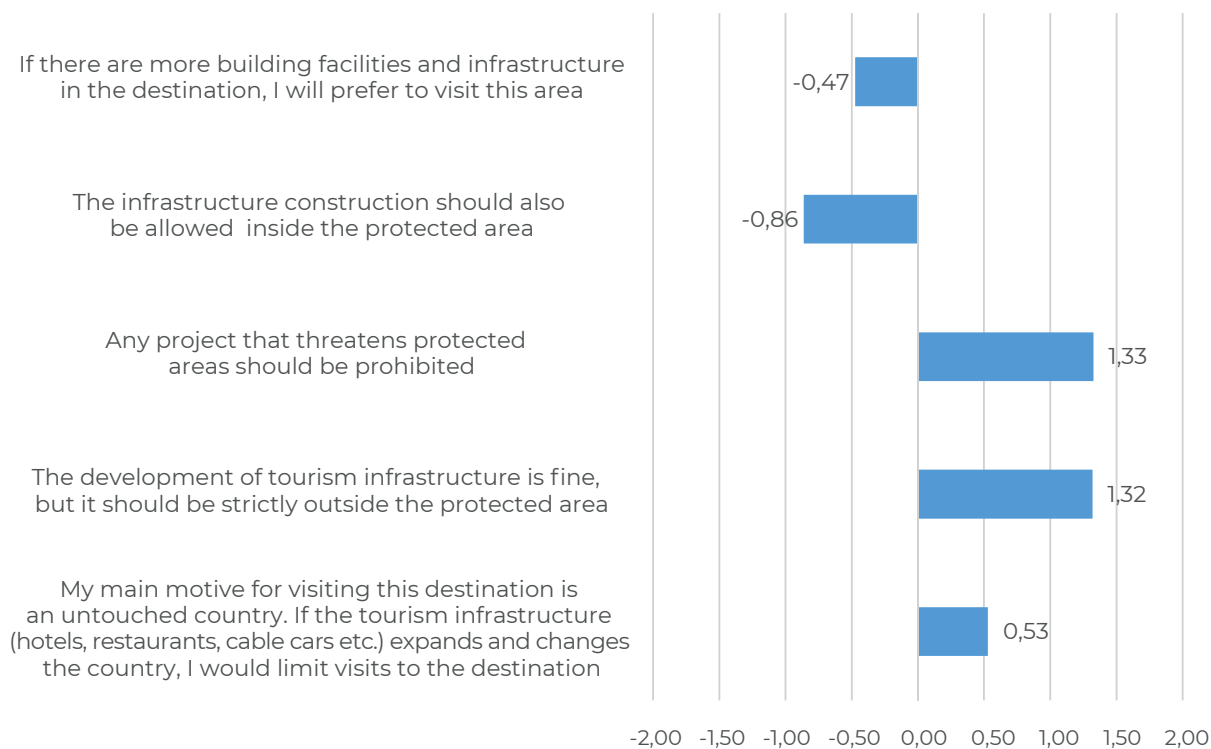
Visitors' satisfaction with tourism services



Environmental impact of tourism

From the environmental point of view, the development of ecotourism is influenced mostly by the infrastructure in areas with different degrees of protection. For this reason, we examined the attitude of visitors to the development of different aspects of infrastructure (-2 strongly disagree, 2 strongly agree).

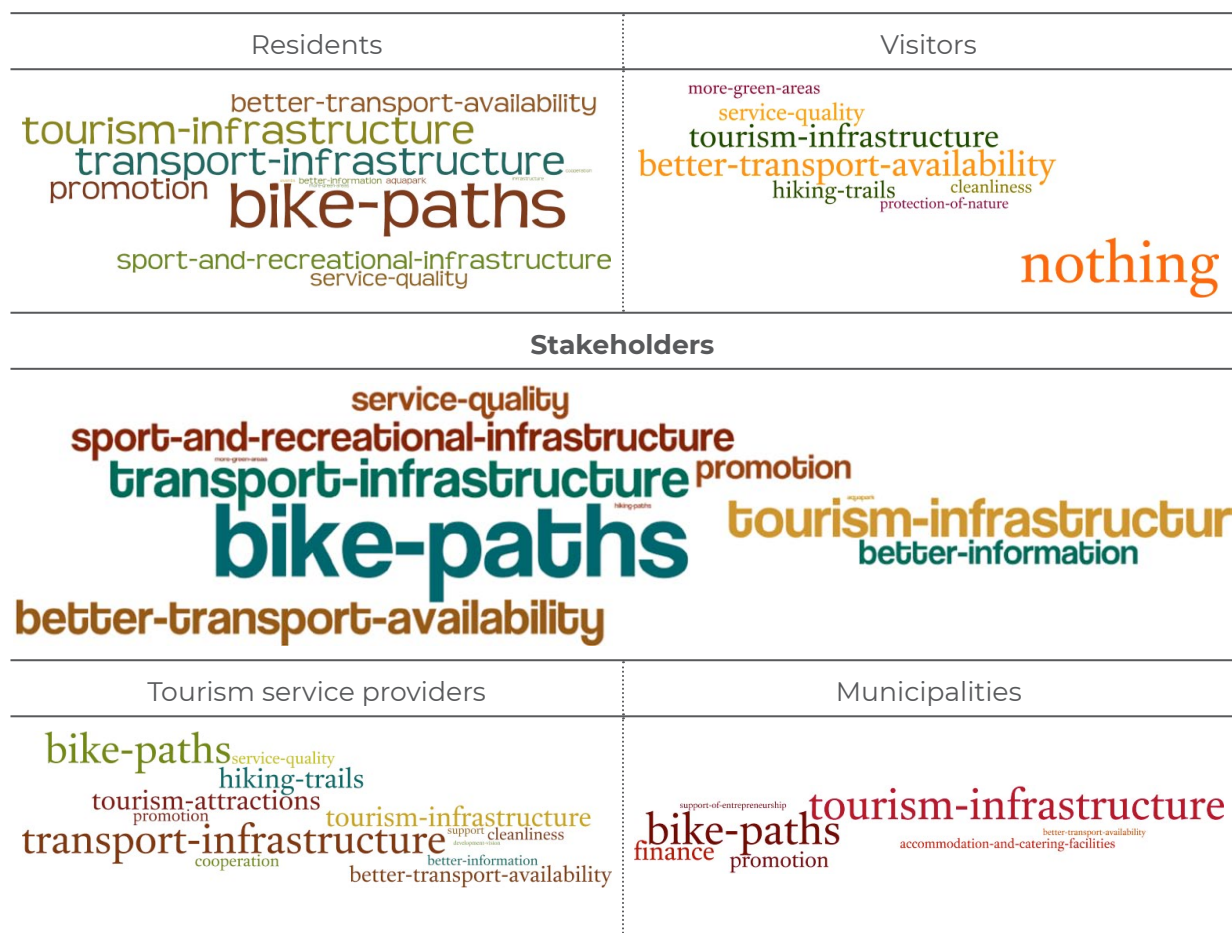
Opinions of visitors on the infrastructure development



The results indicate that visitors do not prefer the construction of infrastructure in protected areas. With excessive construction, visitors would limit their visit to the destination. Regarding their customer behaviour, visitors thus tend to support the development of ecotourism in the Košice Region.

2.2.6. SHORTCOMINGS IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Stakeholders were asked to identify the gaps in the tourism supply in the Košice Region.

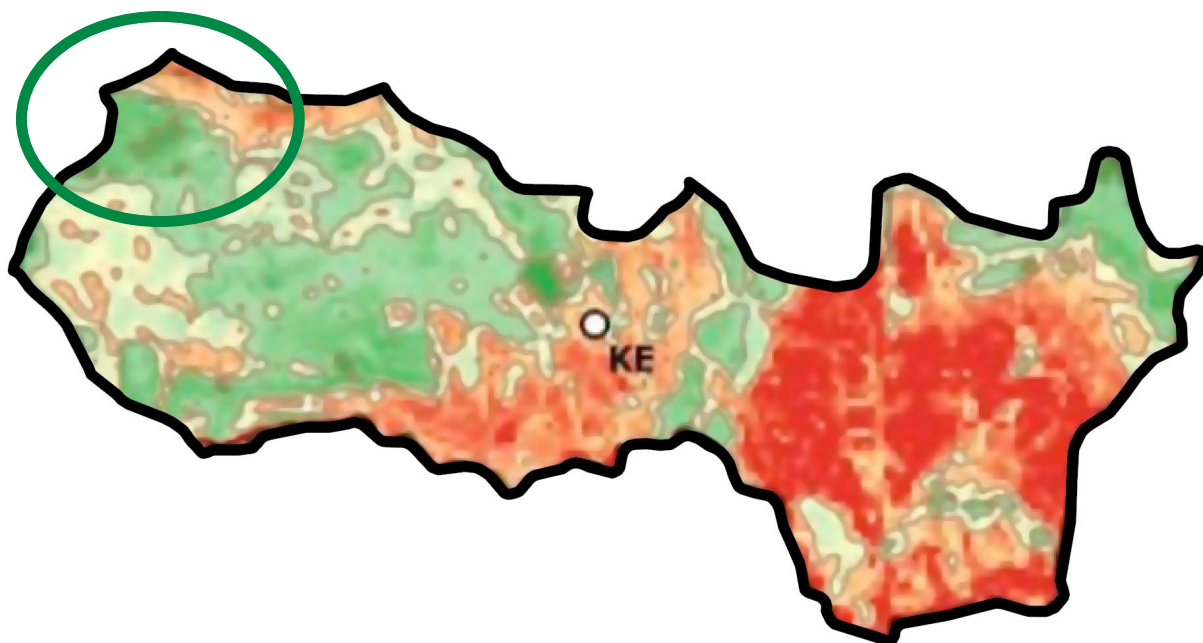


Stakeholders desire particularly bike paths, transport infrastructure, tourism infrastructure (accommodation and restaurant facilities), better transport accessibility, sports and recreational infrastructure (aqua park, swimming pool), area promotion, service quality, as well as better promotion. From the ecotourism development point of view, these are mainly bike paths, transport accessibility, quality of services and promotion of the area.

2.2.7. DESTINATION CARDS

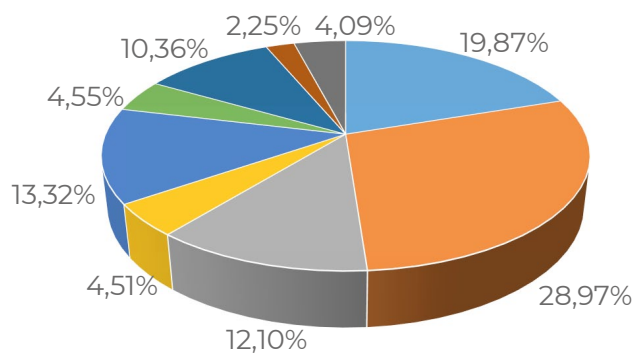
Slovak paradise – destination card

The capacity of destination for ecosystem services - tourism



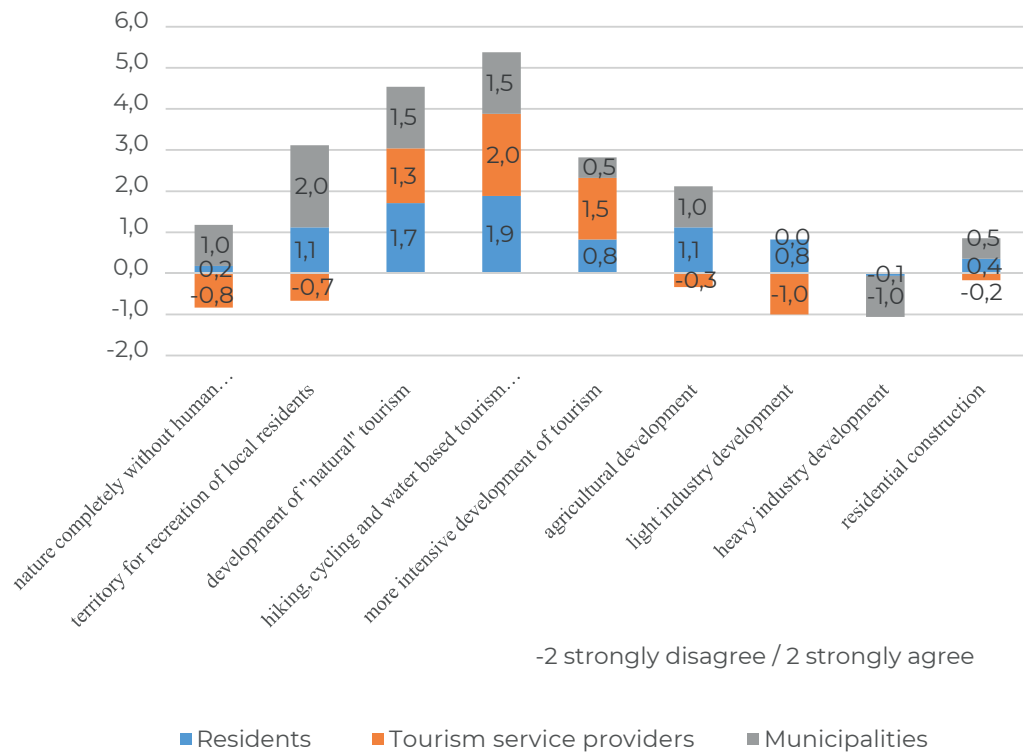
Evaluation of ecosystem services

- the value of biodiversity
- economic value
- life sustaining value
- recreational value
- aesthetic value
- spiritual value
- cultural value
- educational value
- production value



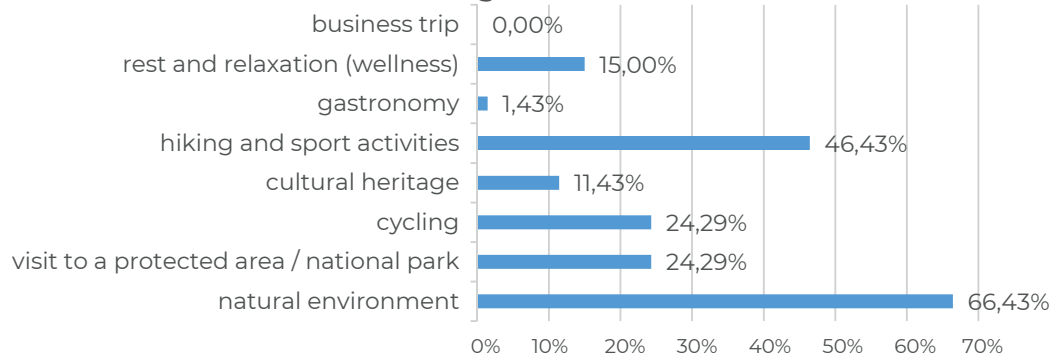
Alternatives of destination development

Local residents, tourism service providers and municipalities

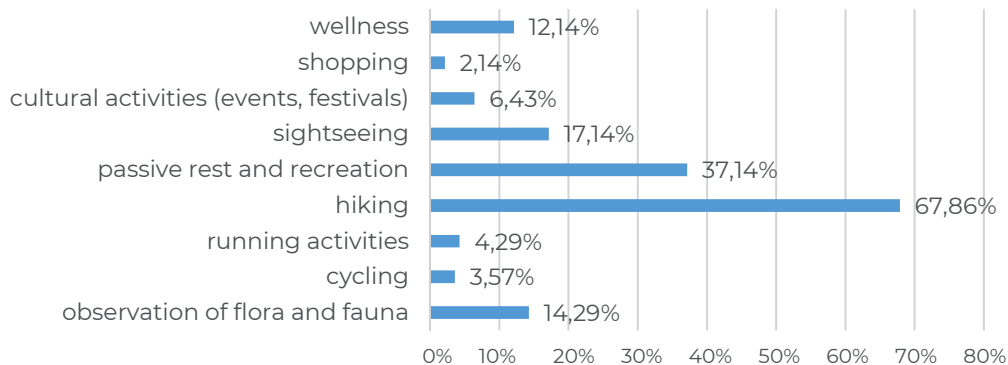


Visitors

Reasons for visiting destination



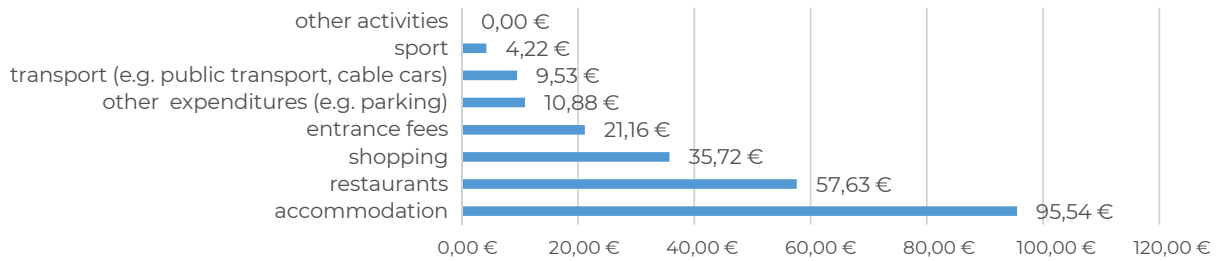
Activities in destination



Economic impact of tourism

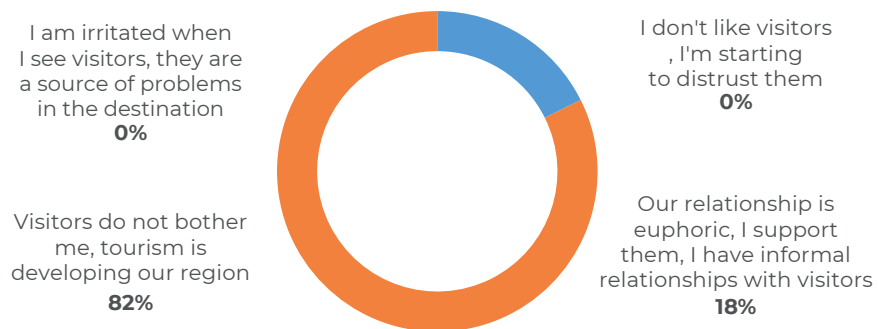
The average length of stay of the visitor is 3.86 days
 The average expenditure per visitor per day is EUR 60.76.

Average expenditure per tourist trip

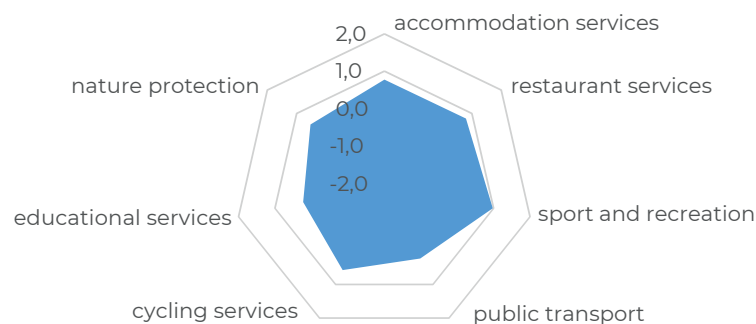


Social impact of tourism

Relationship between residents and visitors



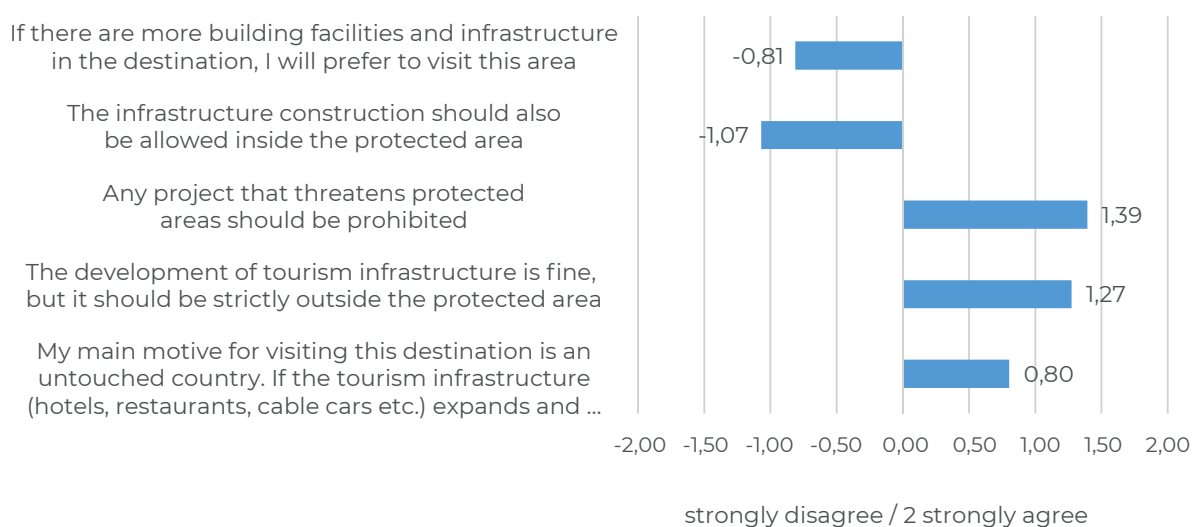
Visitors' satisfaction with services



-2 very dissatisfied / 2 very satisfied

Environmental impact of tourism

Opinions of visitors on the infrastructure development



Shortcomings in tourism development



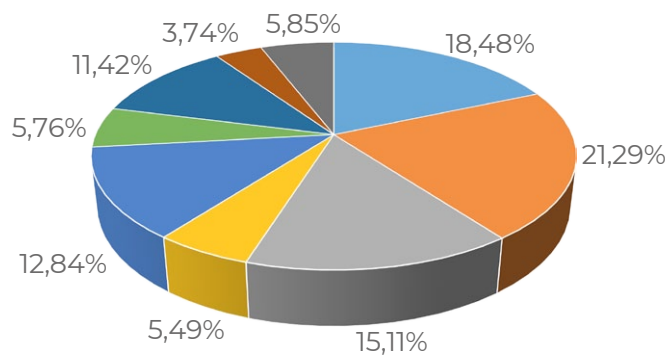
Gemer – destination card

The capacity of destination for ecosystem services - tourism



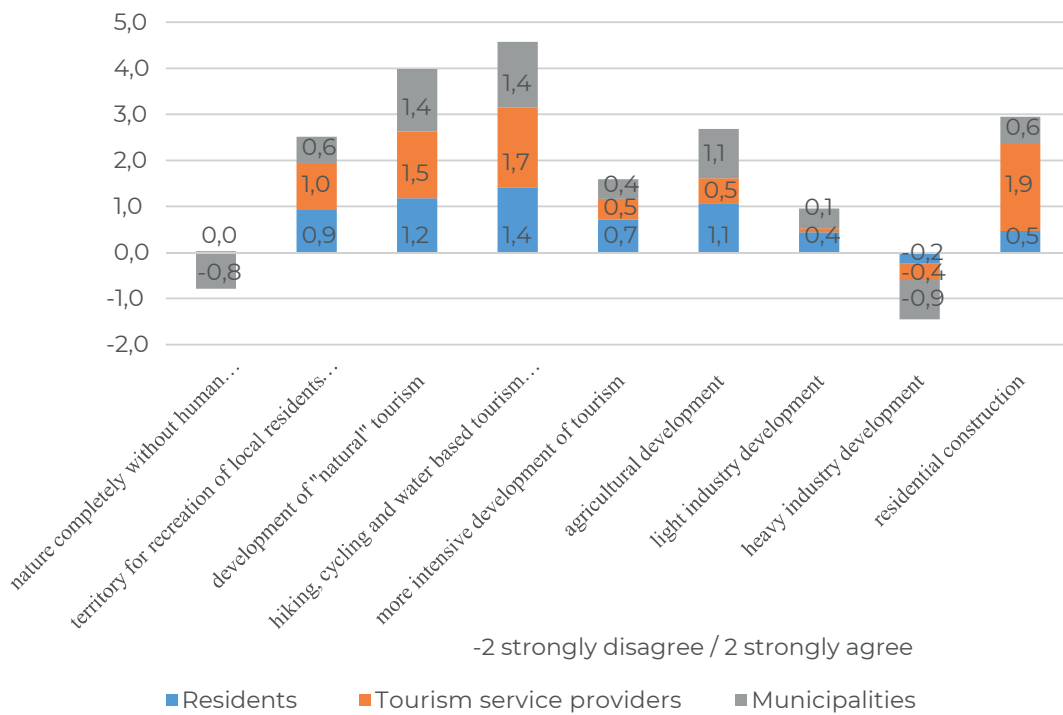
Evaluation of ecosystem services

- the value of biodiversity
- economic value
- life sustaining value
- recreational value
- aesthetic value
- spiritual value
- cultural value
- educational value
- production value



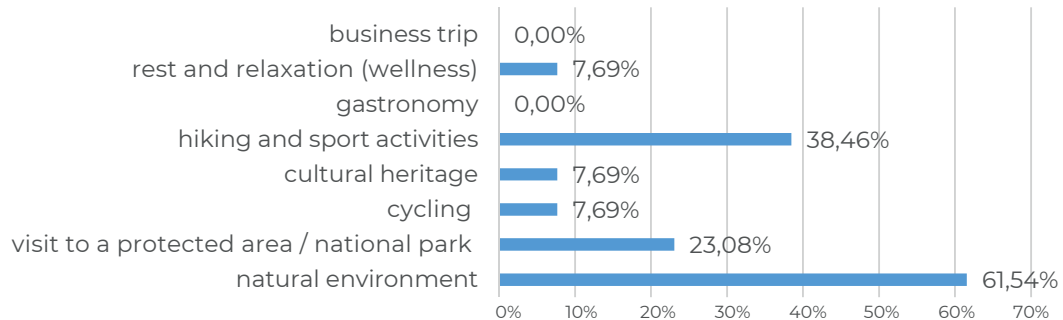
Alternatives of destination development

Local residents, tourism service providers and municipalities

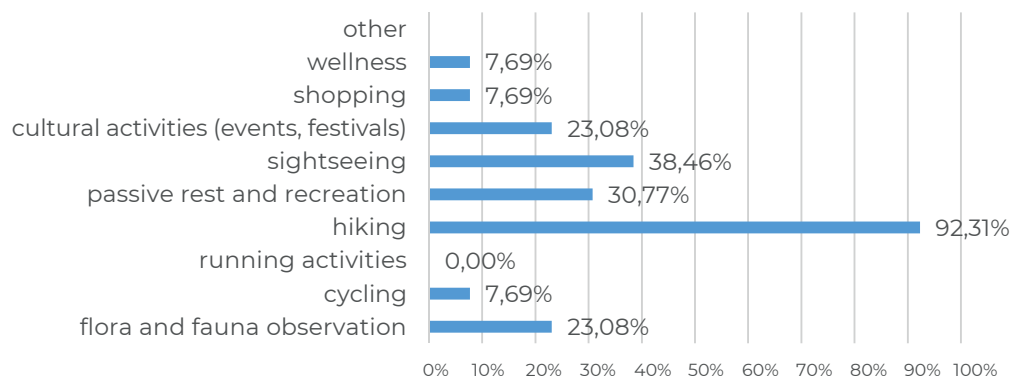


Visitors

Reasons for visiting destination



Activities in destination

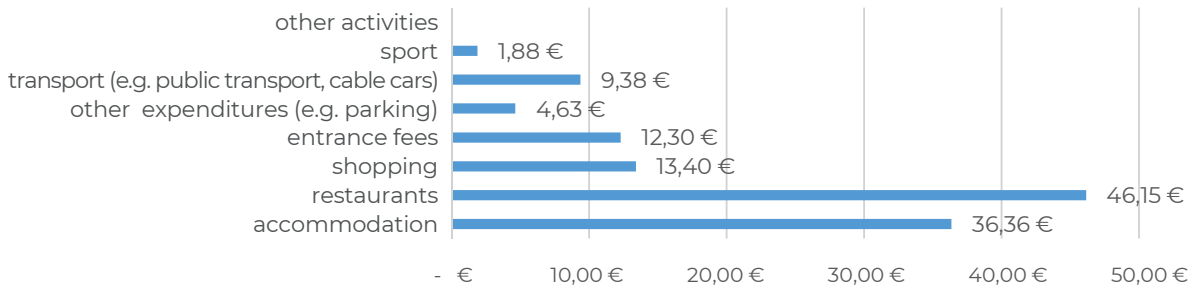


Economic impact of tourism

The average length of stay of the visitor is 1.83 days

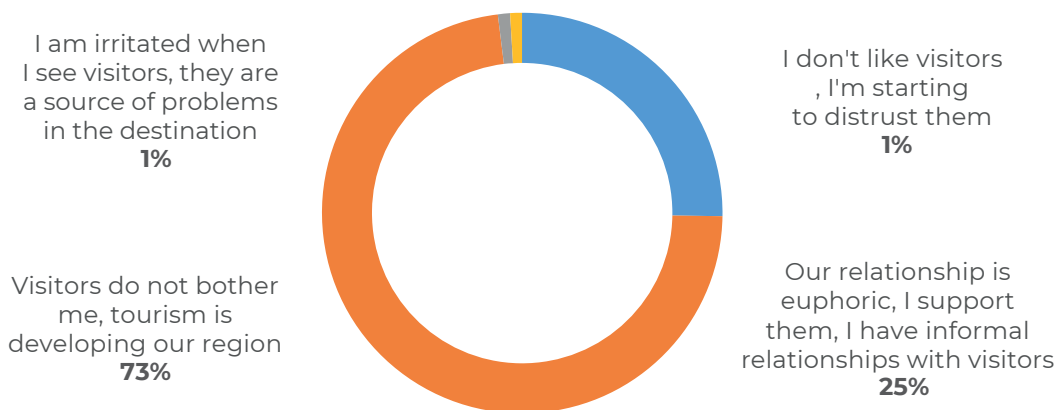
The average expenditure per visitor per day is EUR 67.69

Average expenditure per tourist trip

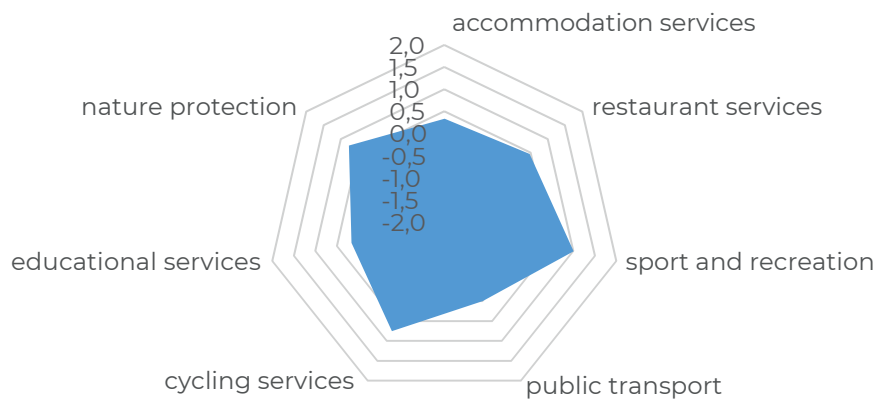


Social impact of tourism

Relationship between residents and visitors



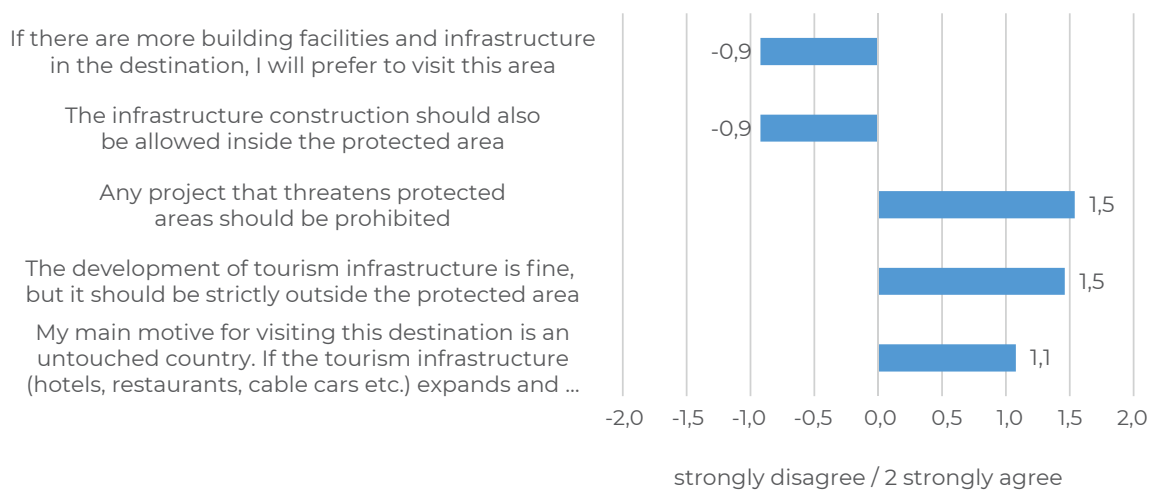
Visitors' satisfaction with services



-2 very dissatisfied / 2 very satisfied

Environmental impact of tourism

Opinions of visitors on the infrastructure development

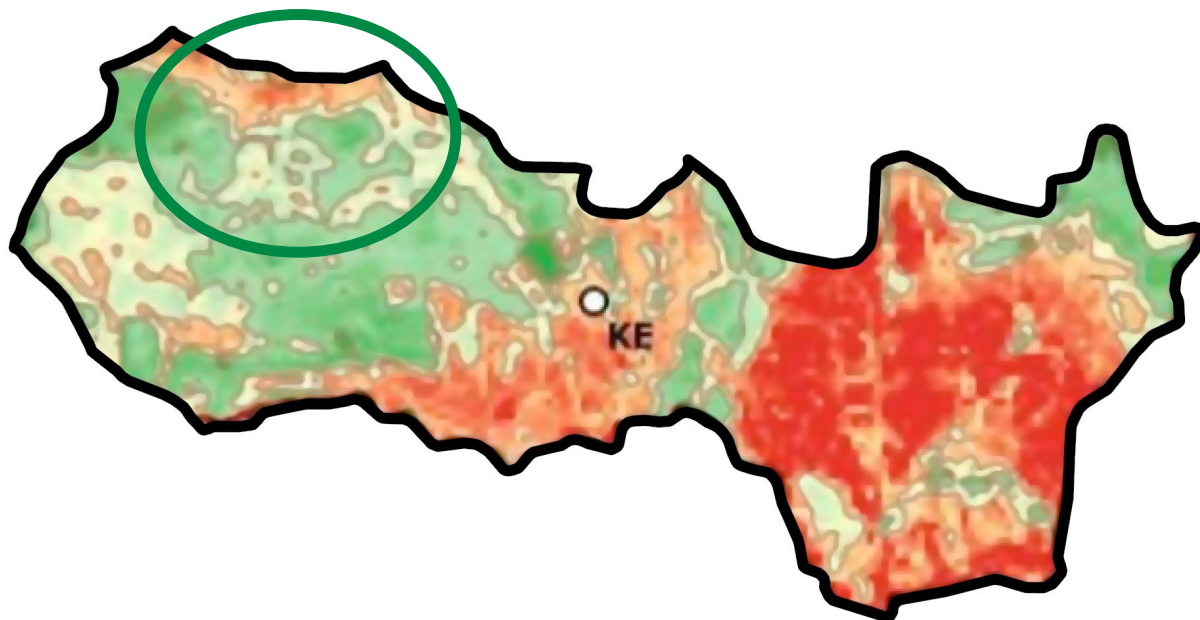


Shortcomings in tourism development



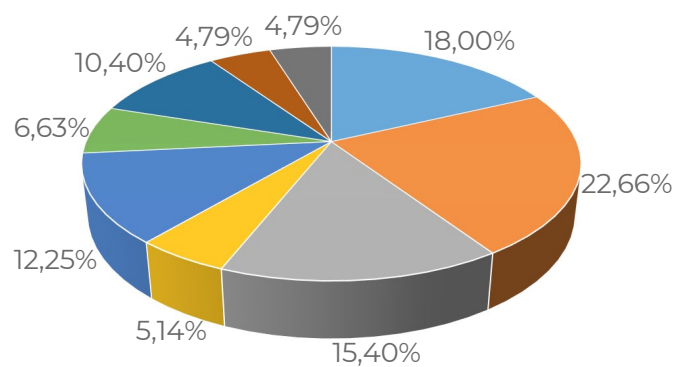
Spiš – destination card

The capacity of destination for ecosystem services - tourism



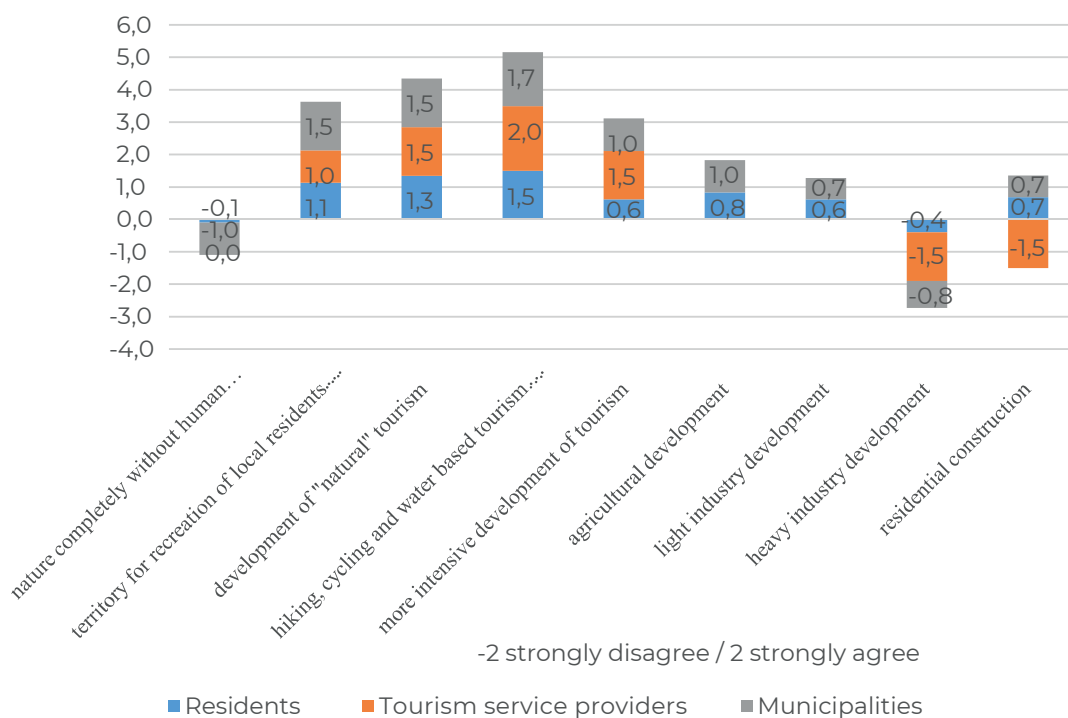
Evaluation of ecosystem services

- the value of biodiversity
- economic value
- life sustaining value
- recreational value
- aesthetic value
- spiritual value
- cultural value
- educational value
- production value



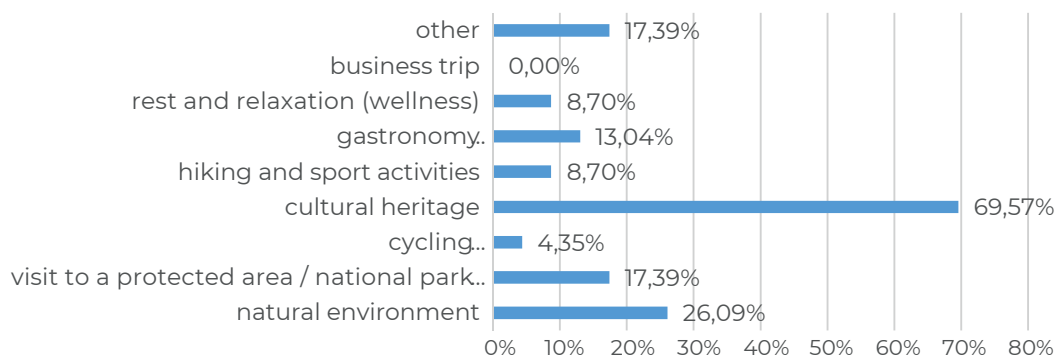
Alternatives of destination development

Local residents, tourism service providers and municipalities

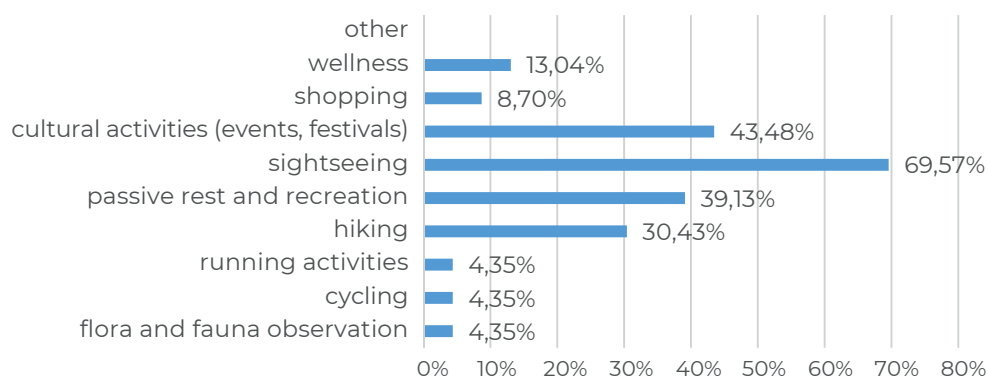


Visitors

Reasons for visiting destination



Activities in destination

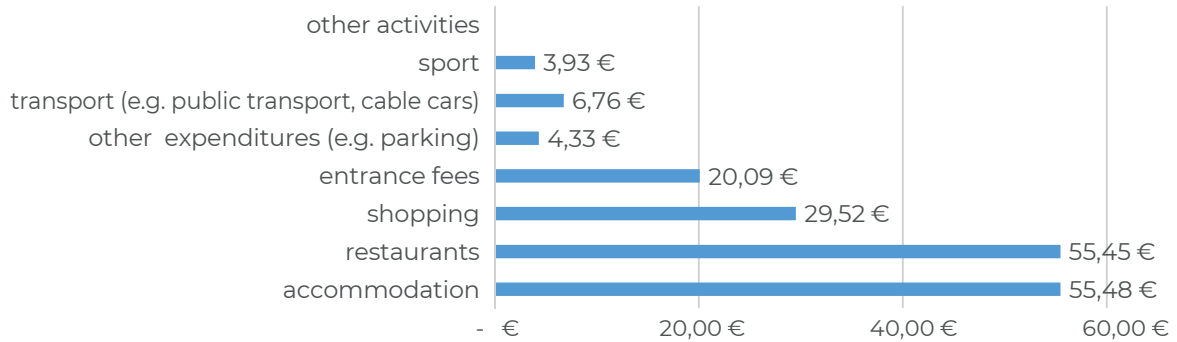


Economic impact of tourism

The average length of stay of the visitor is 3.71 days

The average expenditure per visitor per day is EUR 47.27

Average expenditure per tourist trip



Social impact of tourism

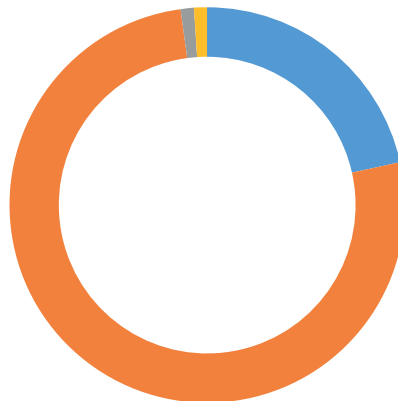
Relationship between residents and visitors

I am irritated when I see visitors, they are a source of problems in the destination
1%

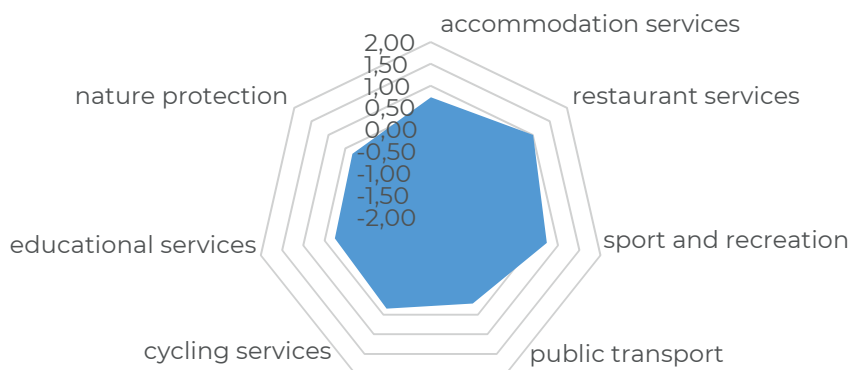
I don't like visitors, I'm starting to distrust them
1%

Visitors do not bother me, tourism is developing our region
76%

Our relationship is euphoric, I support them, I have informal relationships with visitors
22%



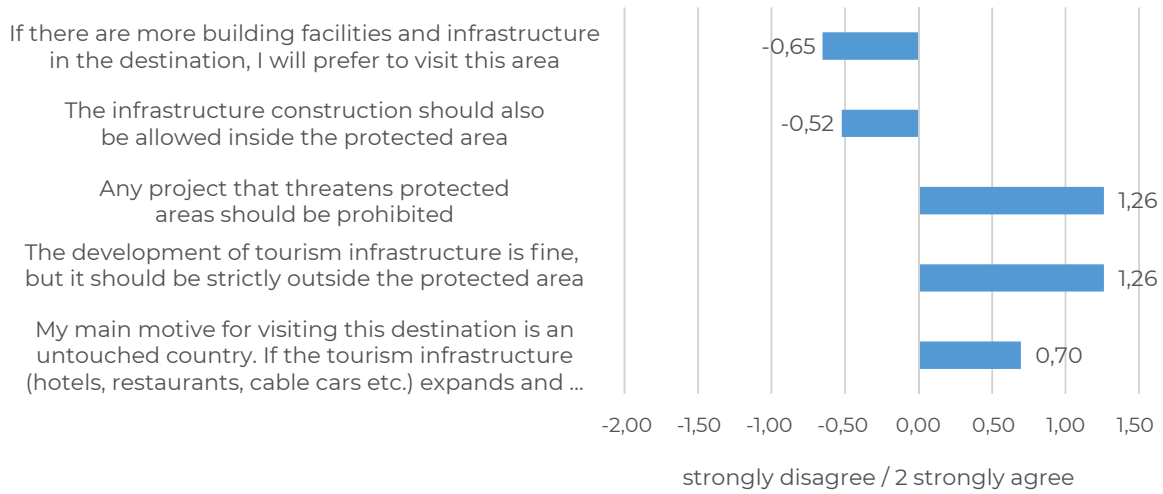
Visitors' satisfaction with services



-2 very dissatisfied / 2 very satisfied

Environmental impact of tourism

Opinions of visitors on the infrastructure development

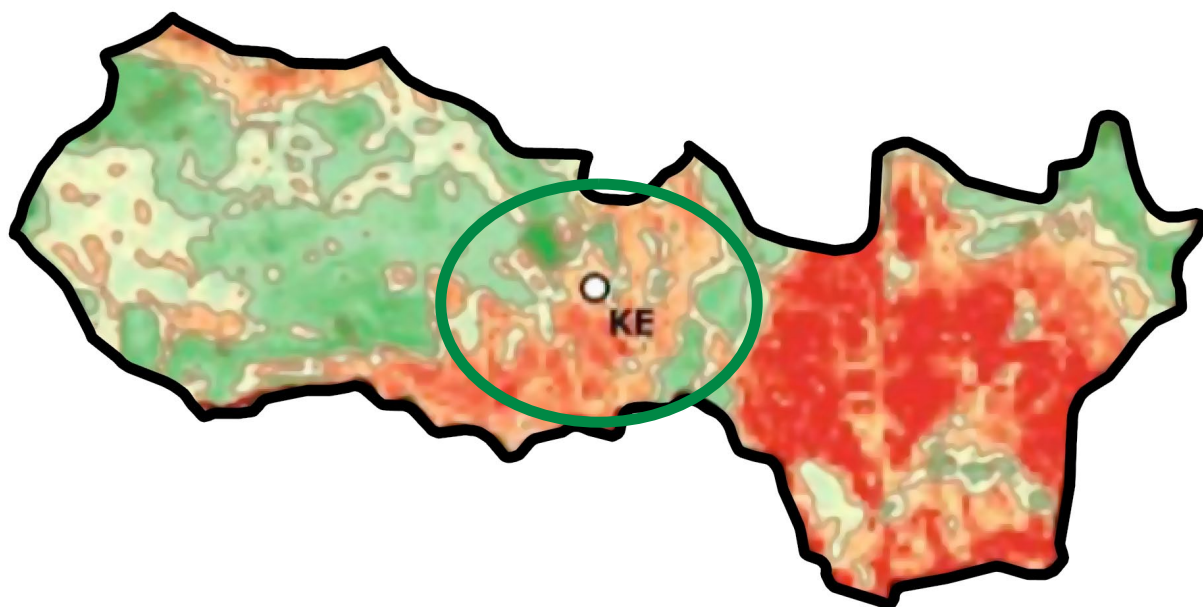


Shortcomings in tourism development



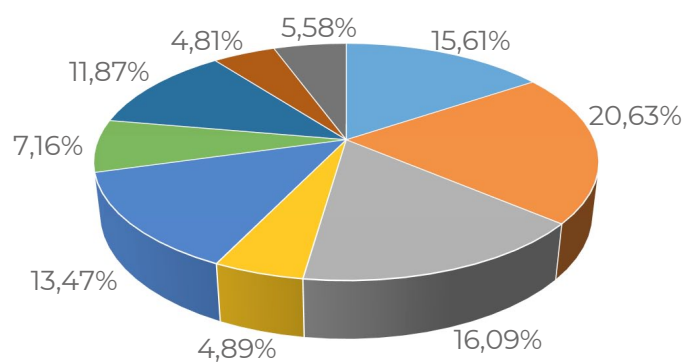
Košice and surroundings – destination card

The capacity of destination for ecosystem services - tourism



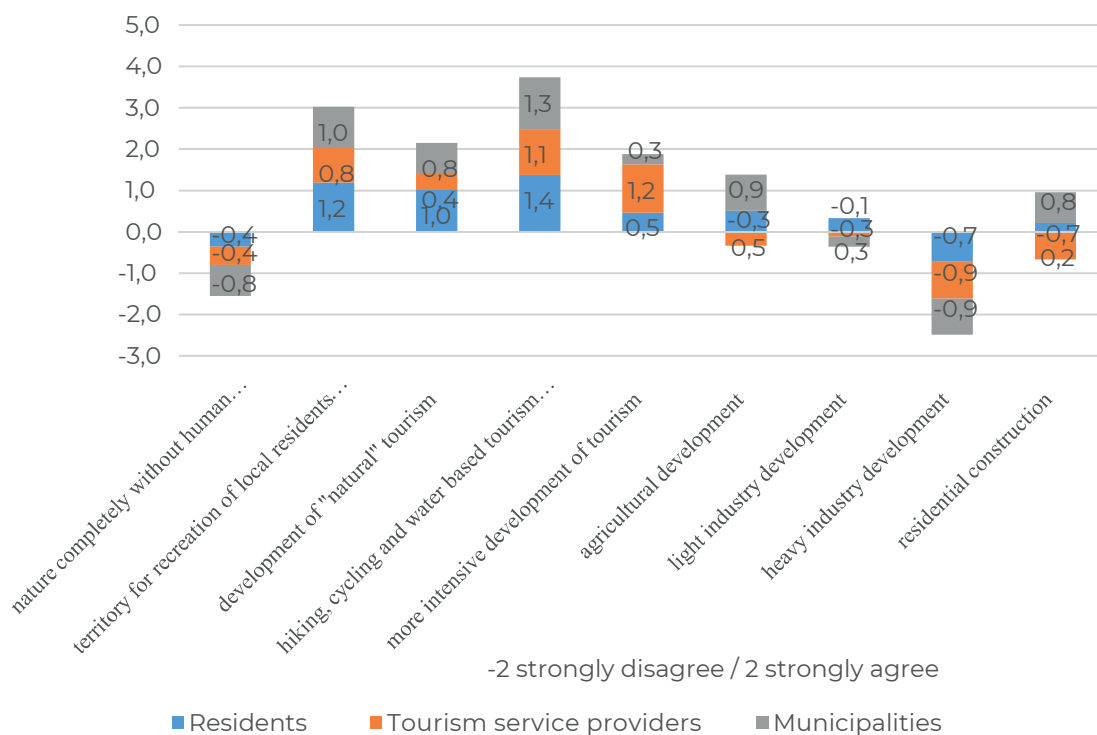
Evaluation of ecosystem services

- the value of biodiversity
- economic value
- life sustaining value
- recreational value
- aesthetic value
- spiritual value
- cultural value
- educational value
- production value



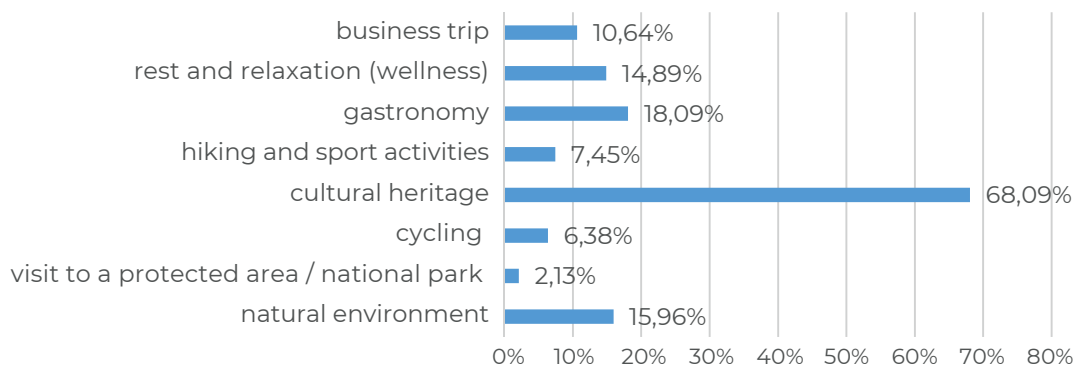
Alternatives of destination development

Local residents, tourism service providers and municipalities

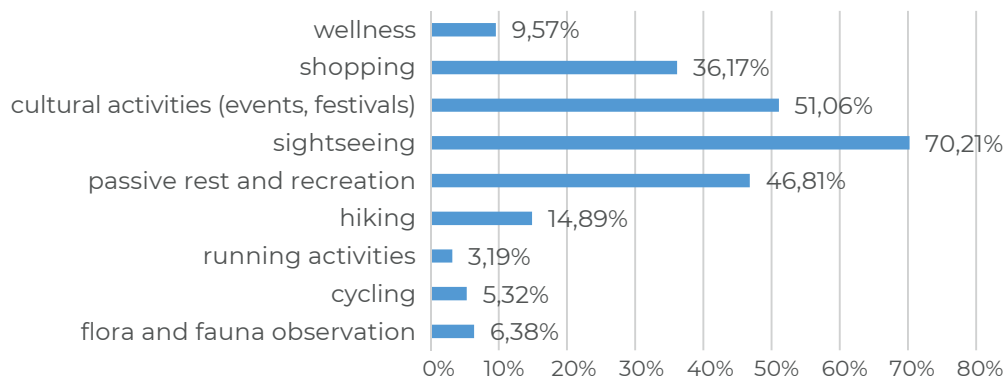


Visitors

Reasons for visiting destination



Activities in destination

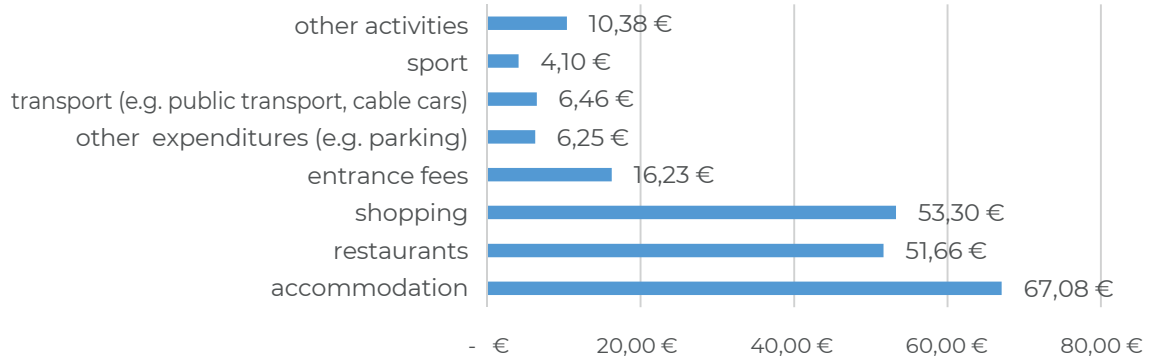


Economic impact of tourism

The average length of stay of the visitor is 2,68 days

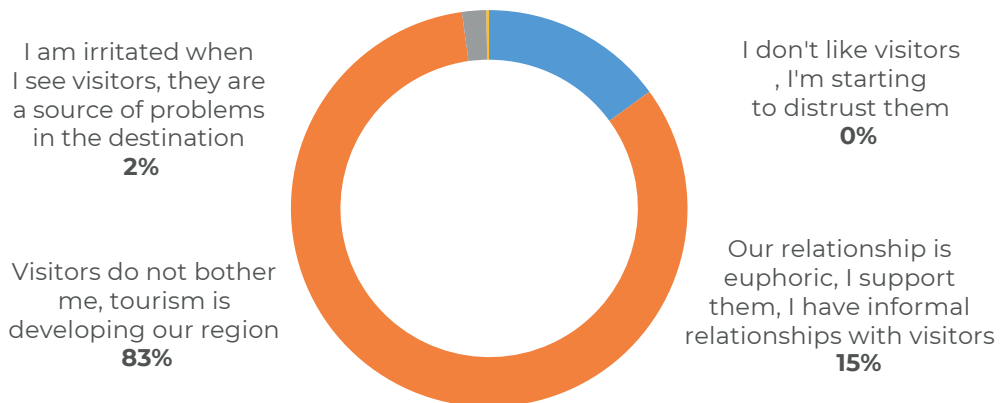
The average expenditure per visitor per day is EUR 80.46.

Average expenditure per tourist trip

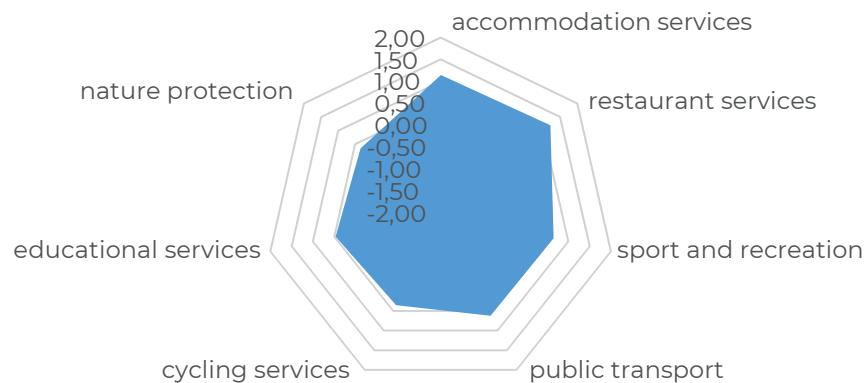


Social impact of tourism

Relationship between residents and visitors



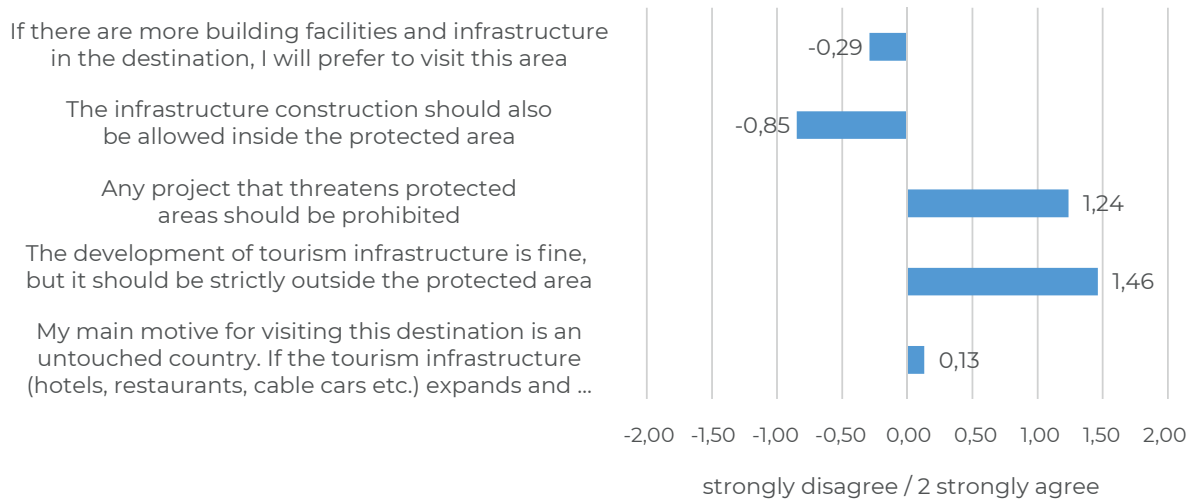
Visitors' satisfaction with services



-2 very dissatisfied / 2 very satisfied

Environmental impact of tourism

Opinions of visitors on the infrastructure development

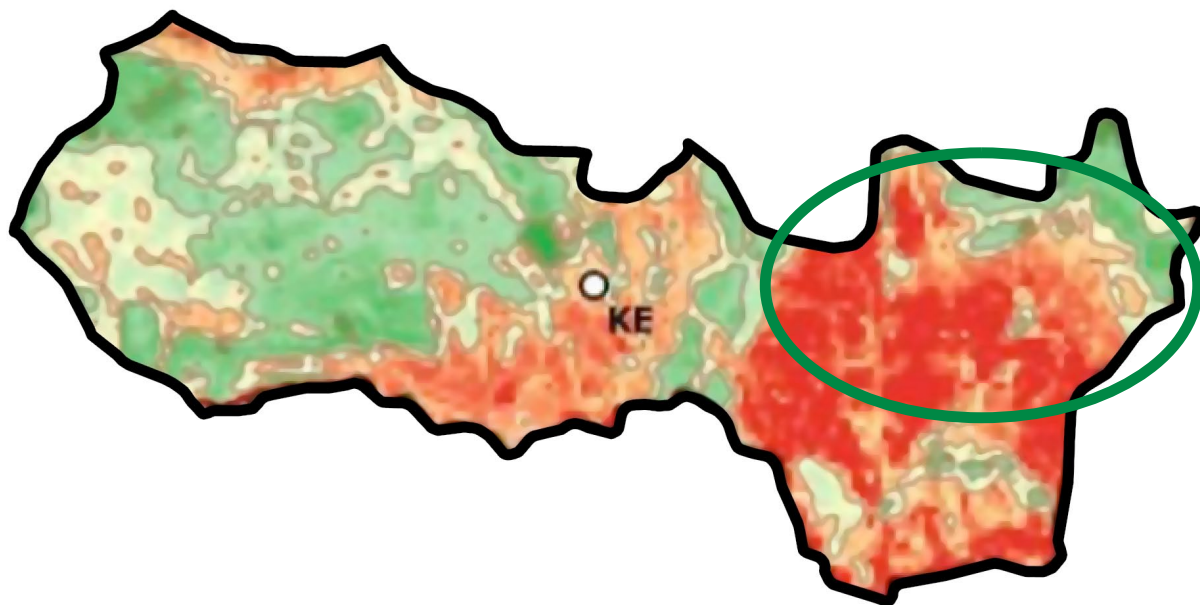


Shortcomings in tourism development



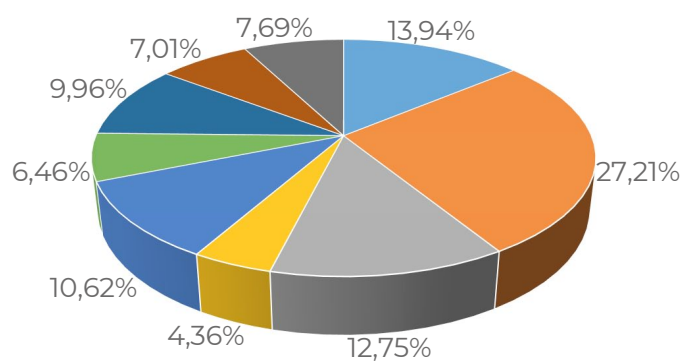
Dolný Zemplín – destination card

The capacity of destination for ecosystem services - tourism



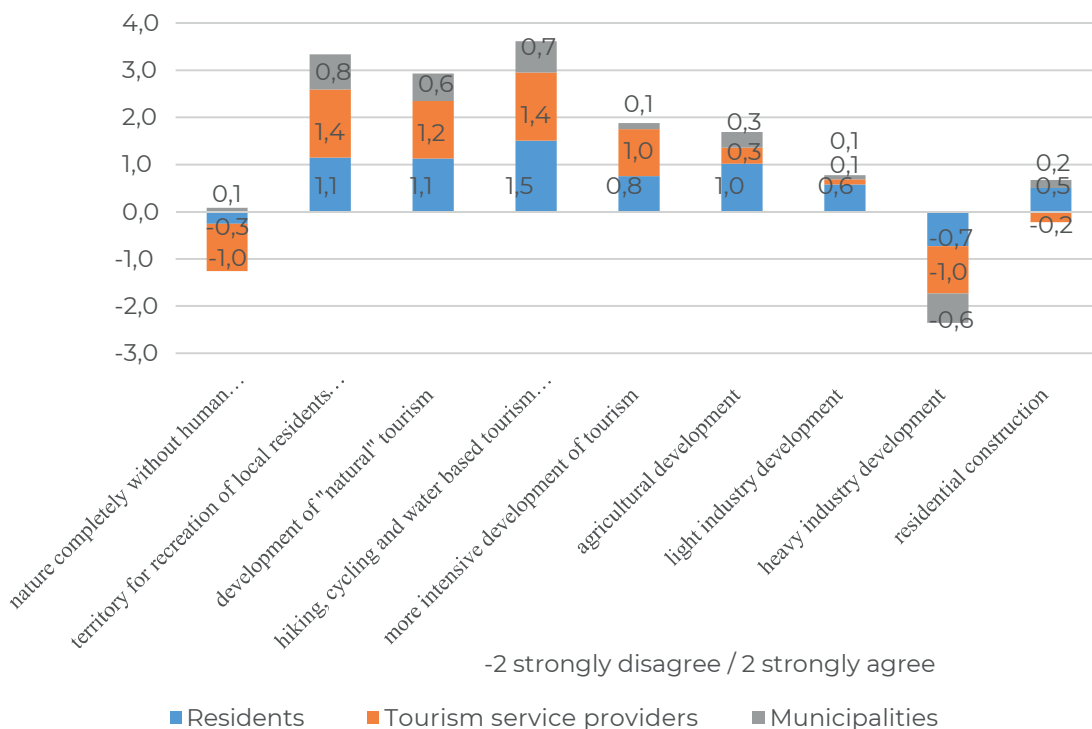
Evaluation of ecosystem services

- the value of biodiversity
- economic value
- life sustaining value
- recreational value
- aesthetic value
- spiritual value
- cultural value
- educational value
- production value



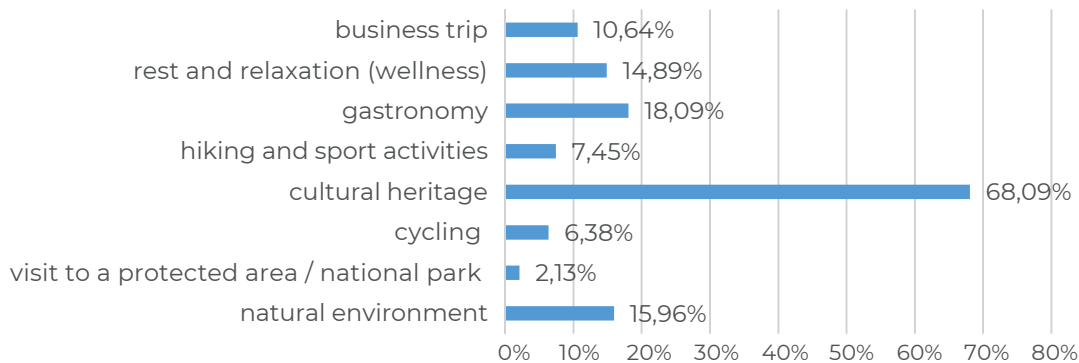
Alternatives of destination development

Local residents, tourism service providers and municipalities

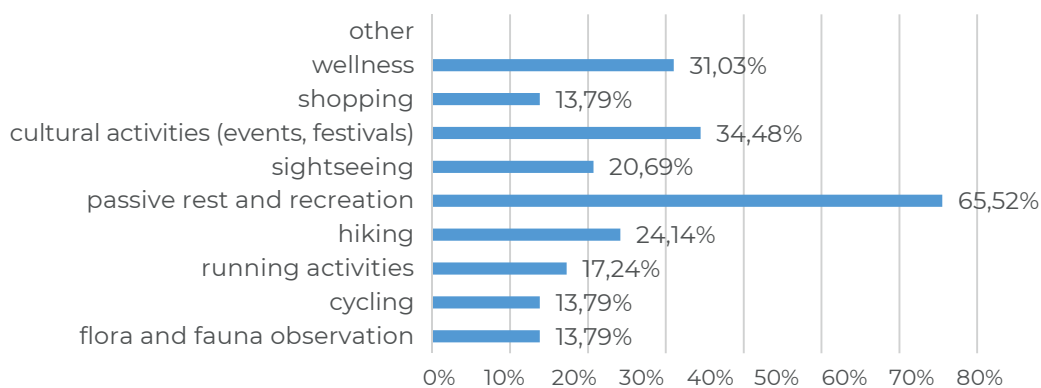


Visitors

Reasons for visiting destination



Activities in destination

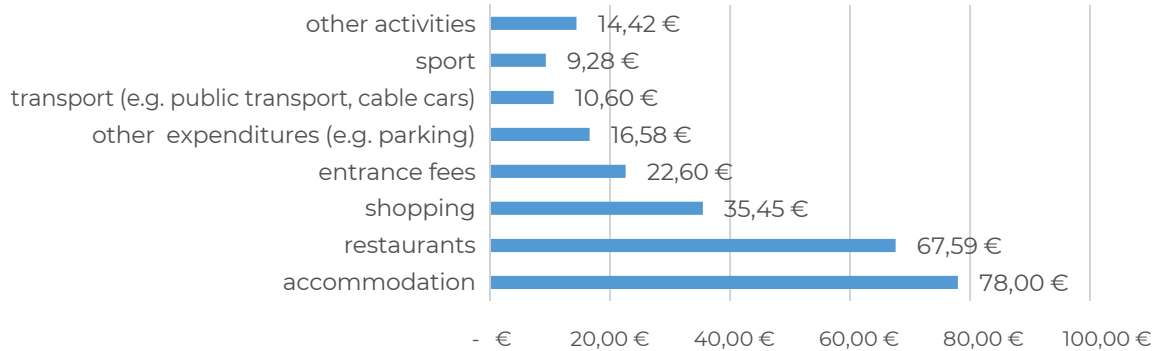


Economic impact of tourism

The average length of stay of the visitor is 4,29 days

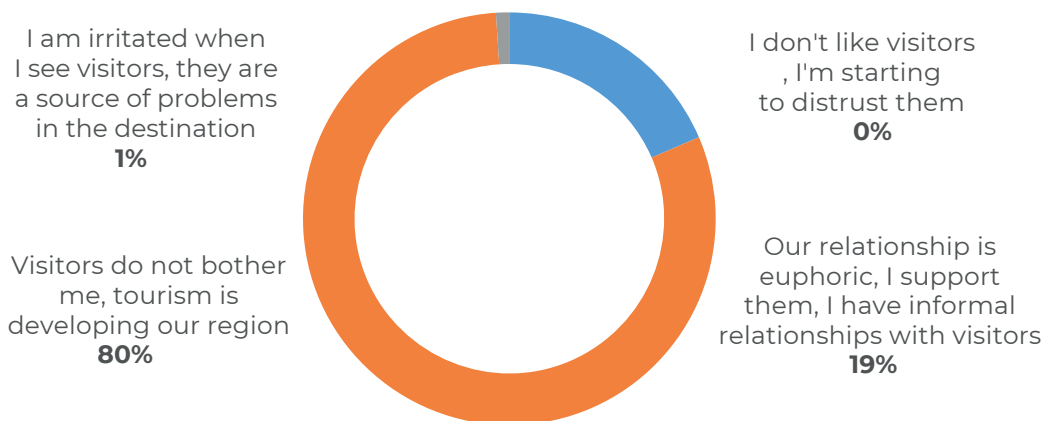
The average expenditure per visitor per day is EUR 59.39.

Average expenditure per tourist trip

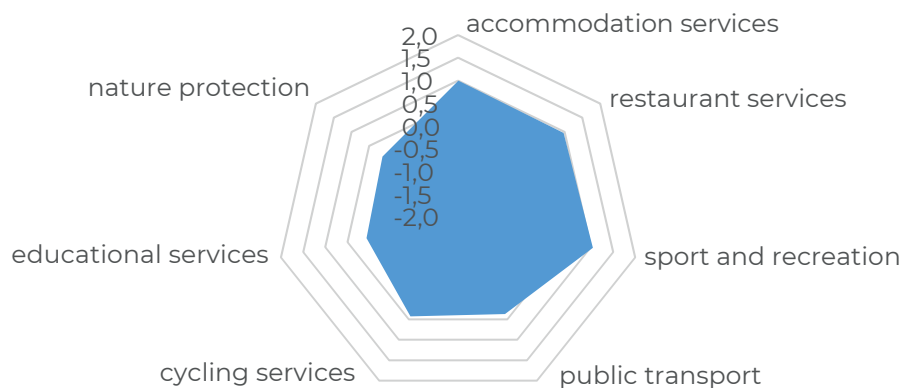


Social impact of tourism

Relationship between residents and visitors



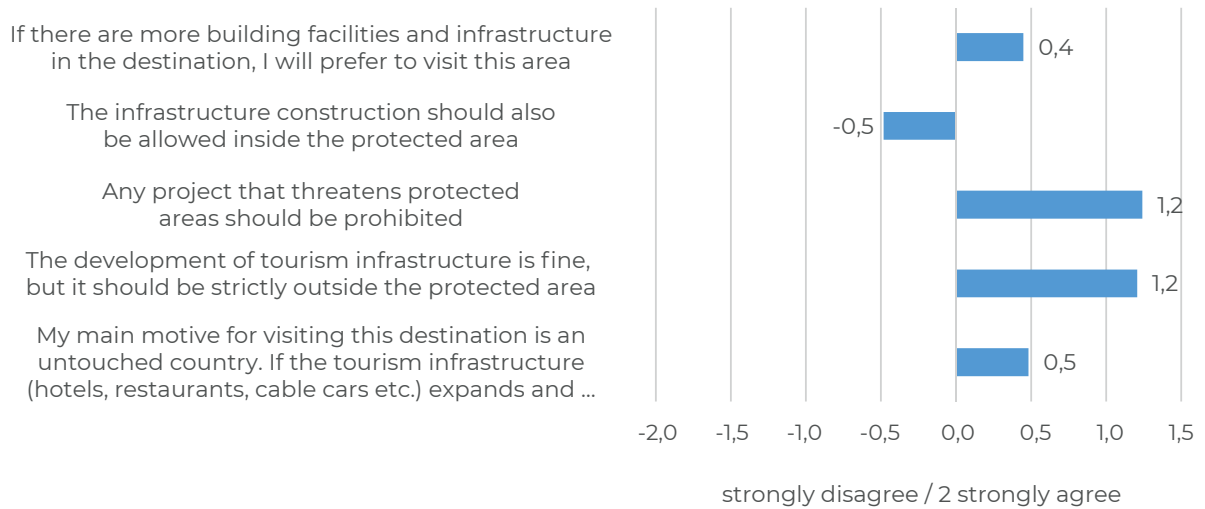
Visitors' satisfaction with services



-2 very dissatisfied / 2 very satisfied

Environmental impact of tourism

Opinions of visitors on the infrastructure development



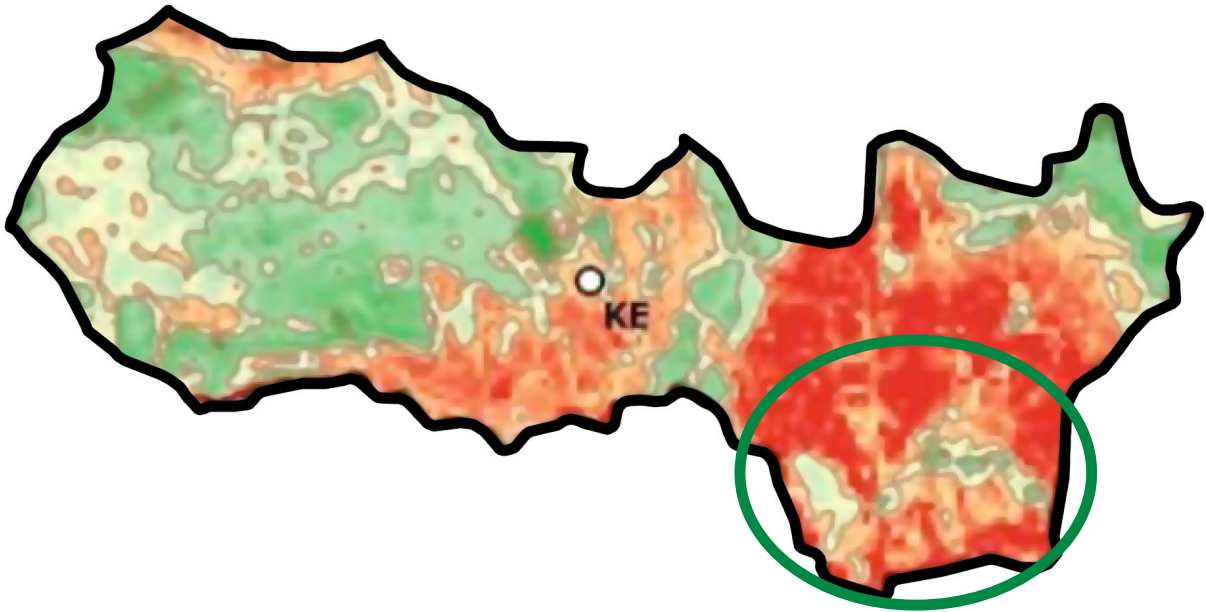
Shortcomings in tourism development

bike-paths

cleanliness
better-information
promotion
infrastructure
tourism-infrastructure

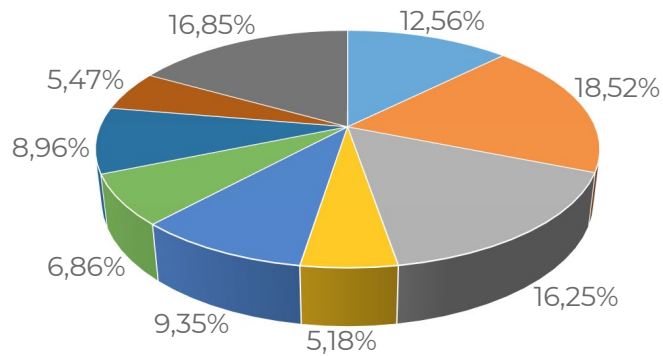
Tokaj – destination card

The capacity of destination for ecosystem services - tourism



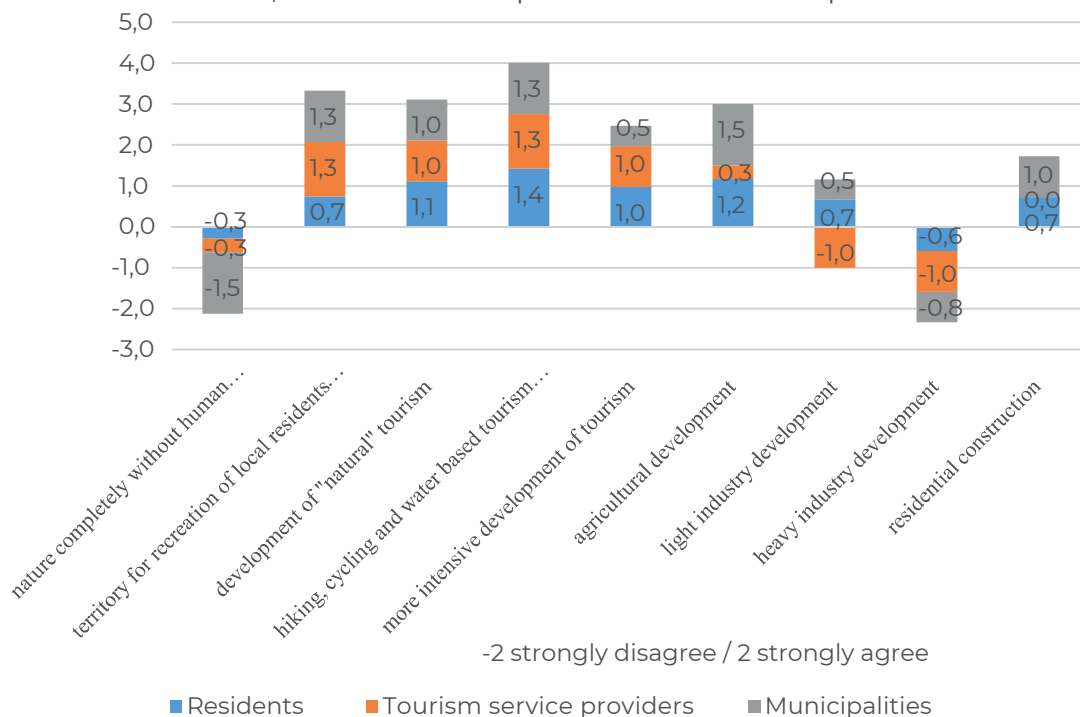
Evaluation of ecosystem services

- the value of biodiversity
- recreational value
- cultural value
- economic value
- aesthetic value
- educational value
- life sustaining value
- spiritual value
- production value



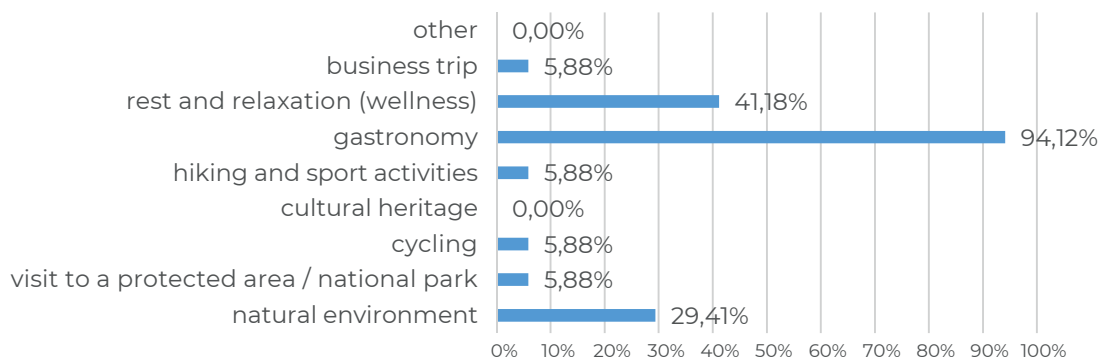
Alternatives of destination development

Local residents, tourism service providers and municipalities

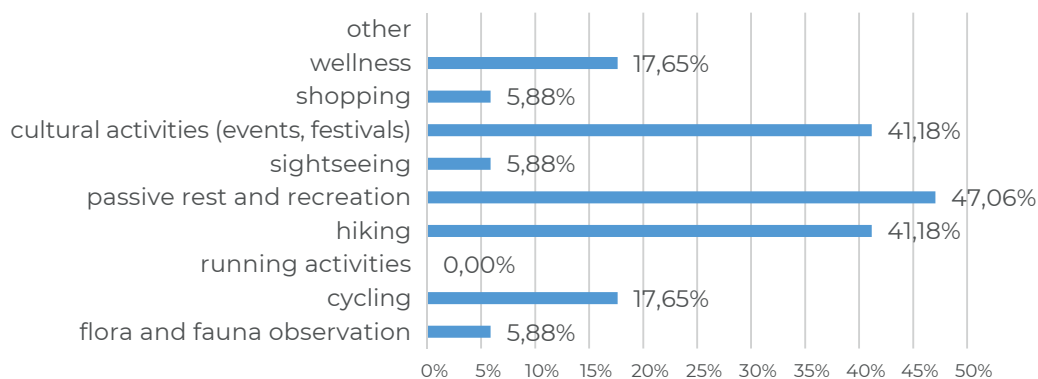


Visitors

Reasons for visiting destination



Activities in destination

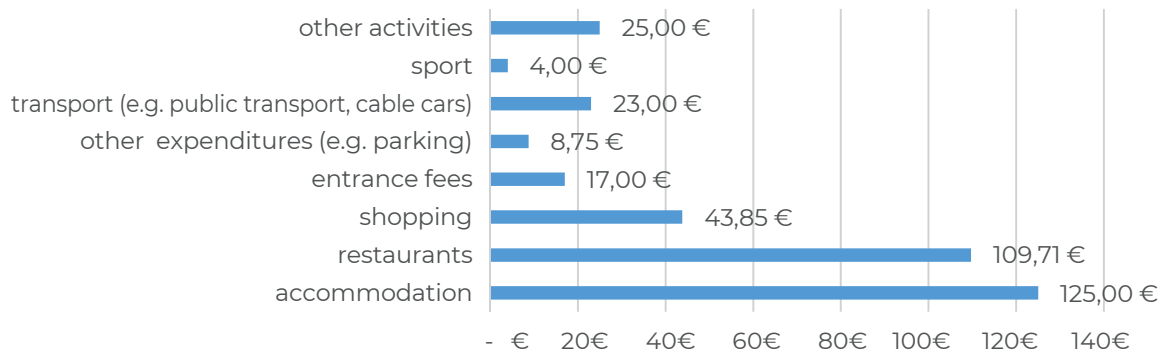


Economic impact of tourism

The average length of stay of the visitor is 3.12 days

The average expenditure per visitor per day is EUR 114.29.

Average expenditure per tourist trip



Social impact of tourism

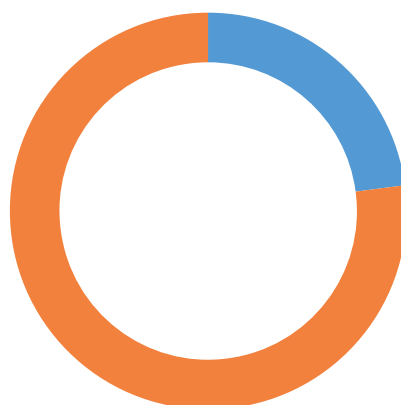
Relationship between residents and visitors

I am irritated when I see visitors, they are a source of problems in the destination
0%

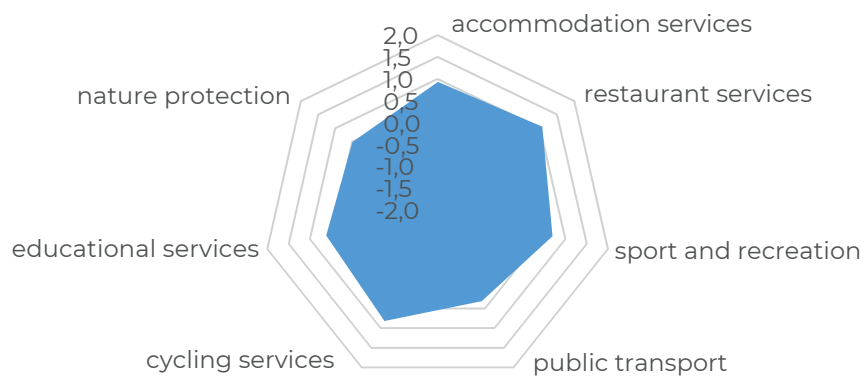
I don't like visitors, I'm starting to distrust them
0%

Visitors do not bother me, tourism is developing our region
77%

Our relationship is euphoric, I support them, I have informal relationships with visitors
23%



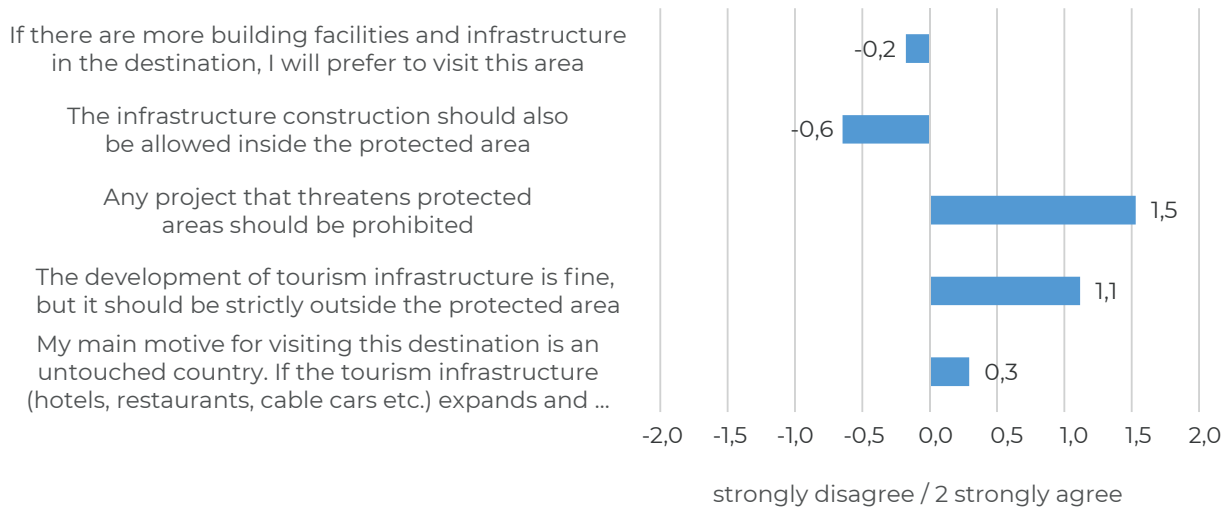
Visitors' satisfaction with services



-2 very dissatisfied / 2 very satisfied

Environmental impact of tourism

Opinions of visitors on the infrastructure development



Shortcomings in tourism development

bike-paths



2.3. INFRASTRUCTURE AND CYCLOTOURISM SERVICES

Within the Košice Region area, there are 1,416 km marked cyclo tourist routes, which makes 15.7% out of over 9,000 km cycling trails in Slovakia. The development of cycling infrastructure in the Košice Region is being dealt with in the document Kostrová sieť cyklistických trás Košického kraja/Skeletal network of cycling trails in the Košice Region. The list of the cycling trails and their map drawings can be found on the official cycling portal of the Košice region <http://ke.cykloportal.sk>, as well as on the websites of the regional tourism organizations. Official cyclo-portal's provider is Slovenský cykloklub/Slovak Cyclo-club, and it is linked over with the websites and applications of the tourism organizations in the Košice region, cycling trail keepers and local governments in the Košice Region. Beside the infrastructure facilities, cyclo-tourism development is also determined by services, especially the information, but also accommodation and hospitality services adapted for the cyclists.

2.3.1. CYCLING ROUTES IN THE KOŠICE REGION



Cycling routes in the Košice Region follow the existing roadways. They mostly use not-too-busy asphalted state and regional highways, or even local, forest and dirt roads. In the Košice Region, there are over 70 permitted, registered and marked cycling routes of various significance, specification and difficulty.

Cycling routes in the Košice Region according to their significance

Destination	 (length in km)	 (length in km)	 (length in km)	 (length in km)	Total (length in km)
Slovenský raj	-	62,1	56,0	28,0	146,1
Gemer	155,0	139,5	39,5	10,9	344,9
Spiš	121,9	111,6	110,1	26,0	369,6
Košice district	124,0	13,8	48,5	4,5	190,8
Dolný Zemplín	-	142,4	30,2	24,9	197,5
Tokaj	110,5	-	28,6	28,2	167,3
Košice Region total	511,4	469,4	312,9	122,6	1416,2

Source: own creation based on the data from ke.cykloportal.sk

Cycling routes in the Košice Region according to their specification

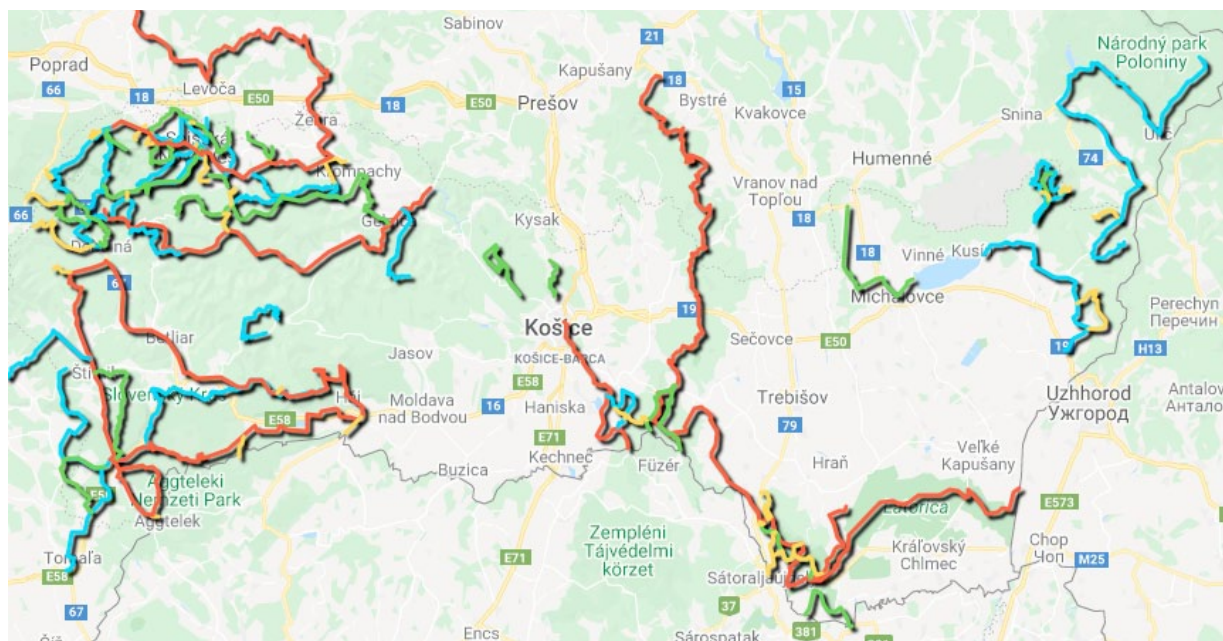
Destination	 CESTNÁ (length in km)	 MTB (length in km)	Total (length in km)
Slovenský raj	45,2	100,9	146,1
Gemer	7,7	337,2	344,9
Spiš	74,5	295,1	369,6
Košice district	-	190,8	190,8
Dolný Zemplín	103,2	94,3	197,5
Tokaj	13,2	154,1	167,3
Košice Region total	243,8	1172,4	1416,2

Source: own creation based on the data from ke.cykloportal.sk

Cycling routes in the Košice Region according to their difficulty

Destination	REKREA (length in km)	SPORT (length in km)	EXPERT (length in km)	Total (length in km)
Slovenský raj	45,8	100,3	-	146,1
Gemer	29,2	315,7	-	344,9
Spiš	13,0	288,2	68,4	369,6
Košice district	63,2	32,5	95,1	190,8
Dolný Zemplín	27,4	170,1	-	197,5
Tokaj	72,0	95,3	-	167,3
Košice Region total	250,6	1002,1	163,5	1416,2

Source: own creation based on the data from ke.cykloportal.sk



The map of cycling routes in the Košice Region

Source: <http://ke.cykloportal.sk/cyklotrasy>

The list of cycling routes according to the tourist destinations in the Košice Region

Destination	Cycling route
Slovenský raj	<p>5705 SmižianskaMaša - KošiarnyBriežok - NadLesnicou – Čingov</p> <p>8708 - SpišskéTomášovce - PriTomášovskomvýhlade - (turn towards Tomášovský view) - Ďurkovec, crossroads.</p> <p>8724 Letanovce - Letanovskýmlyn/mill</p> <p>2715 Podlesok - Stratená (Glacká cesta/road)</p> <p>5853 PriPodlesku – Kláštorisko</p> <p>2703 - Hrabušice, Mýto – Krivian</p> <p>8720 Podlesokmajer/farmstead (circuit)</p> <p>8937 - Vernár - Kopanickácesta, Podkova</p> <p>8730 - Chotárnadolka - ZadnýHýľ</p> <p>2851 Mlynky - Biele Vody</p> <p>2712 PalcmanskáMaša - Dobšiná, Tri ruže</p> <p>5702 - Dobšiná, Tri ruže - Pod Čižmou - DobšinskáLadováJaskyňa/IceCave - Nižnázáhrada - Pod Hanesovou I – Voniarky</p> <p>8938 - DobšinskáLadováJaskyňa/IceCave - Pusté pole</p> <p>8729 Dobšiná (Depovo) - PredČuntavou</p>
Gemer	<p>029 Cyklomagistrála/main cycling routeSlovenskýKras</p> <p>8701 VyšnáSlaná – Rejdová</p> <p>5711 Plešiveckáplanina - Barkaihochata/challet</p> <p>2589 Slavošovskýtunel/tunnel</p> <p>2702 Koniarskacyklocesta/cycling trail</p> <p>5703 PrielomMuráňky</p> <p>2701 Údolie/Valley ofČremošnej a Slanej</p> <p>8715 Hrušov - Szögliget – Hungarian border</p> <p>8716 Turňa n. Bodvou - Hostovce – Hungarian border</p> <p>8714 Domica - Aggtelek – Hungarian border</p> <p>2705 Turbína - Bieleskaly - Vodnánádrž/Water reservoirÚhorná</p>
Spiš	<p>2858 MáriaHuta - Chata Erika</p> <p>021 Hnileckácyklomagistrála/main cycling route</p> <p>5855 Hlinisko - Gelnica, most/bridge</p> <p>8718 Kolínovce – Galmus</p> <p>014 Spišskácyklomagistrála/main cycling route</p> <p>2709 - Matejovce nad Hornádom – Ploštiny</p> <p>2713 - Lípy - Rudňany - Pod Svinskýmvrchom</p> <p>8725 Lípy – Svinské</p> <p>8921 Nálepko - Zavadskéškalky</p> <p>2853 Rakovec - Súľová - Nad Pekliskom</p> <p>5712 Domaňovce - SpišskýHrušov</p> <p>8721 Chrašť nad Hornádom - Miloj (crossroads)</p> <p>5717 Teplička - PriOdorínskejchate/challet</p> <p>8922 Madaras - Pod Tepličkou – Roveň</p> <p>2714 - PriKřížku - Puciská – Danišovce</p> <p>5714 SpišskéTomášovce - Iľašovce - Harichovce – Danišovce</p> <p>5854 - SpišskáNováVes, Radnica - Za Hornádom - VyšnýHámor - Novoveská Huta - Pod Flajšerom - Vojtechovasamota - ZadnýHýľ - Geravy - Pod Suchýmvrchom</p> <p>2855 SpišskéTomášovce - Pod Kačelákom (SpišskéPodhradie)</p> <p>8727 Sans-Souci - Pri zimnej studni</p> <p>2711 - Sp. NováVes (žel.st.) - Madaras - Vyšnýhámor - Ferčekovce - Nov. Huta - Pod Flajšerom - Med. hlava - Košiar. briežok - SNV, Mier - Sp. Nová Ves (train station) – circuit</p> <p>8854 Spišská Nová Ves – Mier</p> <p>5853 Pri Podlesku – Kláštorisko</p>

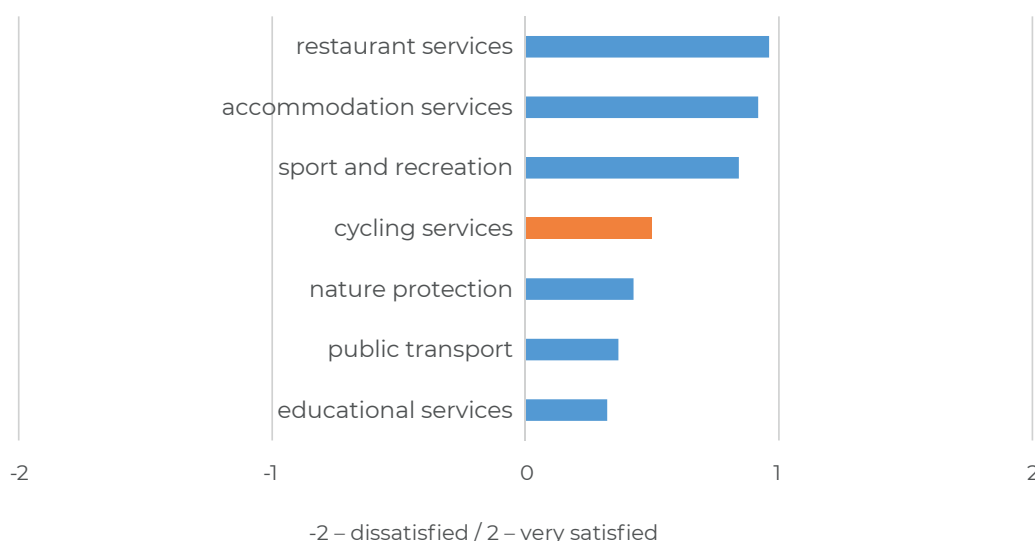
Košice district	5707 Alpínka circuit 5719 Ťahanovce – Družstevná pri Hornáde 039 Košice – Skároš 2706 Nižná Myšľa – Skároš 8723 Veľká Márovka - Červený vrch 023 Alžbeta (Herlianska cesta – sedlo/saddleback - Dargovský priesmyk/pass) 5715 Slanec – Hungarian border, direction Füzér 5713 Slanec - Hungarian border, direction Puzstafalu
Dolný Zemplín	5716 Zemplínska šírava, stredisko/resort Biela Hora – Strážske 2880 Around Morské Oko 5876 Potašňa - Jelenia Lúka 8887 Potašňa - Nad Potašňou 8888 Potašňa – Strihovce 2888 Vihorlatské úzkokolejky/narrow-gaugerailways - Jovsa – Krčava 8719 Koromľa – Priekopa 2875 Cycling trail Ikon 8895 Ruský Hrabovec - Ruská Bystrá
Tokaj	017 Dolnozemplínska cyklo magistrála/main cycling route 8728 Through the forest, Čerhov - ATC Maria Veľaty N8701 Educational route Vyhliadková/With a view 5710 Vine cycling route (Čerhov – Ladmovce, dam) 8717 Slovenské Nové Mesto – Viničky N8703 Educational route Vínohradnícka/Vineyard 051 Zemplínska cyklo magistrála/main cycling route 5718 Veľká Krčava - Pacín

Source: Own creation based on the data from ke.cykloportal.sk

Although the number of cycling routes in the Košice Region increases yearly, the local residents, service providers, self-governments and partially also the visitors consider their condition and number as insufficient. The cycling trails in the destinations of Košice district, Dolný Zemplín and Tokaj are regarded as the greatest shortcomings of tourism development.

From the aspect of visitors, the cycling routes and services are viewed neutrally (average satisfaction ratio is 0.49).

Rating of satisfaction with services by the Košice Region visitors (focus on cycling routes and services)



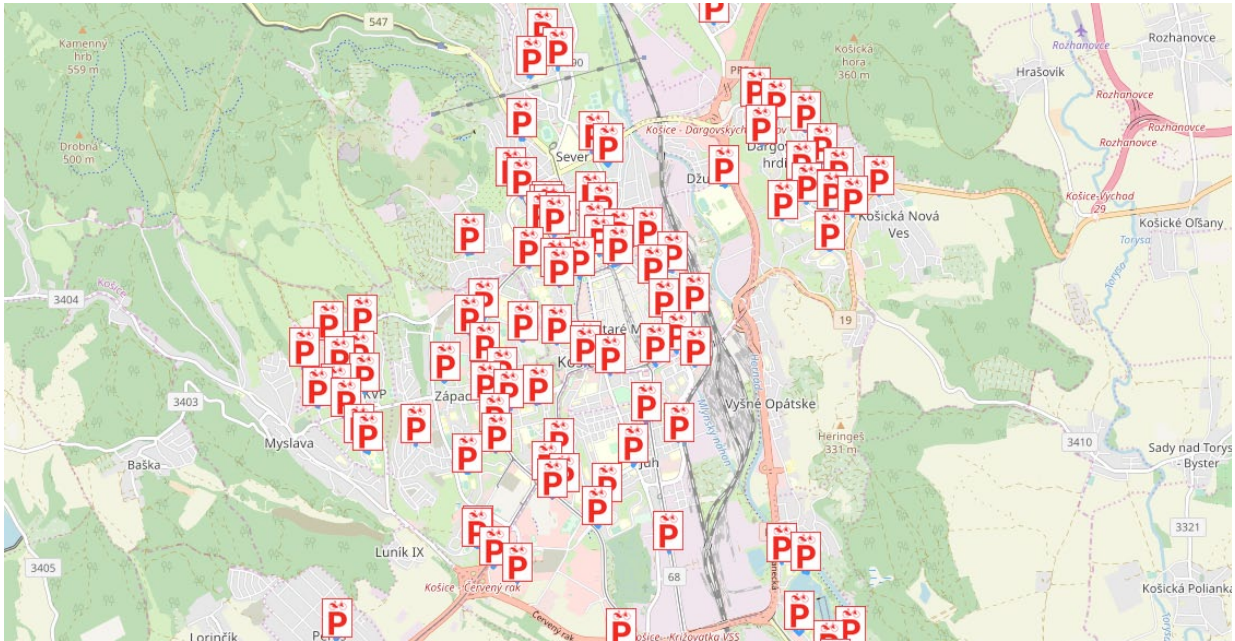
2.3.2. SERVICES FOR THE CYCLO-TOURISTS IN THE KOŠICE REGION

The cyclo-tourism services include those provided by the cyclist-friendly accommodation and hospitality facilities, information system and additional facilities for the cyclists. In the region there are only two accommodation facilities with the label “Cyclists welcome”, although the total number of cyclist-friendly accommodation and hospitality facilities is greater (they are located mainly in Slovenský raj/Slovak Paradise, Gemer, Dolný Zemplín and Tokaj).

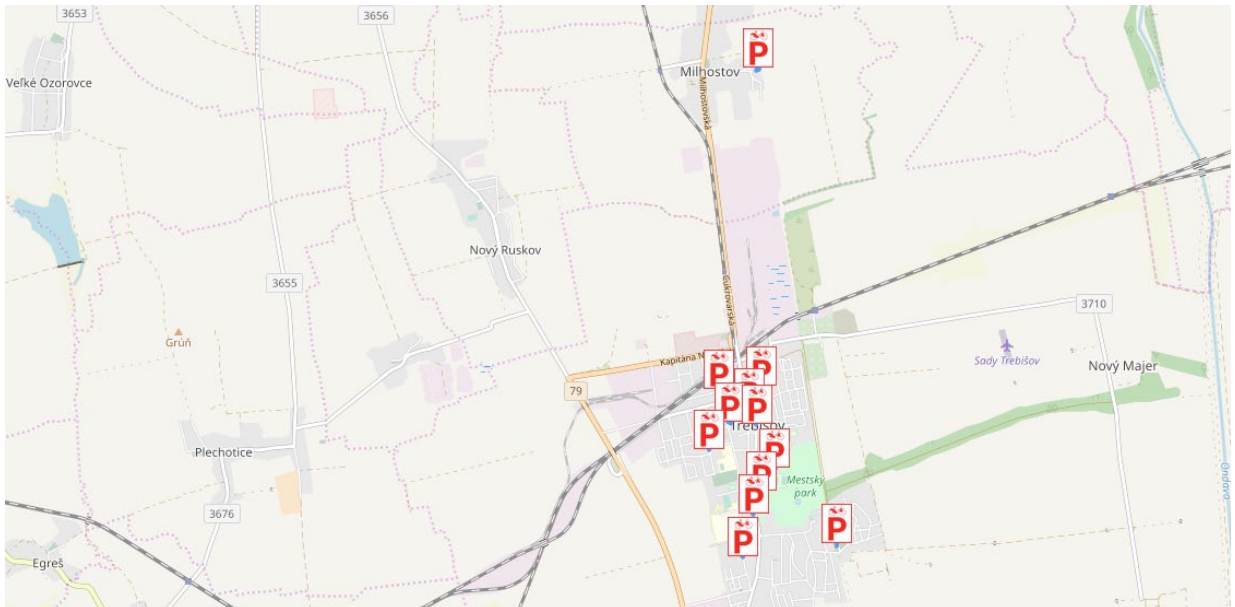
Information system – information panels are insufficient in terms of their quantity, quality and content. The number of information panels (as of 2011) on cycling routes was 28, which does not meet the needs of cyclo-tourism development in the region. The highest number of panels is in Tokaj, Dolný Zemplín, Slovenský raj and in the urban forests around Košice (Cyklotrasy v Košickom kraji/Cycling routes in the Košice Region, 2013). The information system, however, is supplemented by the mobile applications and official websites for the cyclists where the technologically-advanced visitors can download a particular route in GPX format. There is a space for creation of more mobile applications for the cyclo-tourists. The additional facilities (shelters, arboreal, or picnic spots) are mostly built near the forest cycling trails, but there are very few of them. Nowadays it is also necessary to build the signs pointing to the sights and attractions, bike servicing stands, or e-bike charging stations. In this sense, we appreciate cyklodepo/cycling depot located in the village of Veľaty, Trebišov district (gateway to Tokaj), which offers electronic and classic bike rentals plus an e-bike charger.

The cyclo-tourism services also include bike sharing that has recently been launched in three towns of the Košice Region – Košice, Trebišov, Moldava nad Bodvou. This service is meant for both local residents and visitors who can pick up the bicycle from the stand after registration with the Antik company, the system provider. It is recommendable that the visitors use the „Jazdím, potom platím“/“Ride first, pay later“ service, which costs 1€ per hour. Locals can also use monthly or seasonal prepayments. The e-scooter sharing system by Bolt is also developing in town Košice.

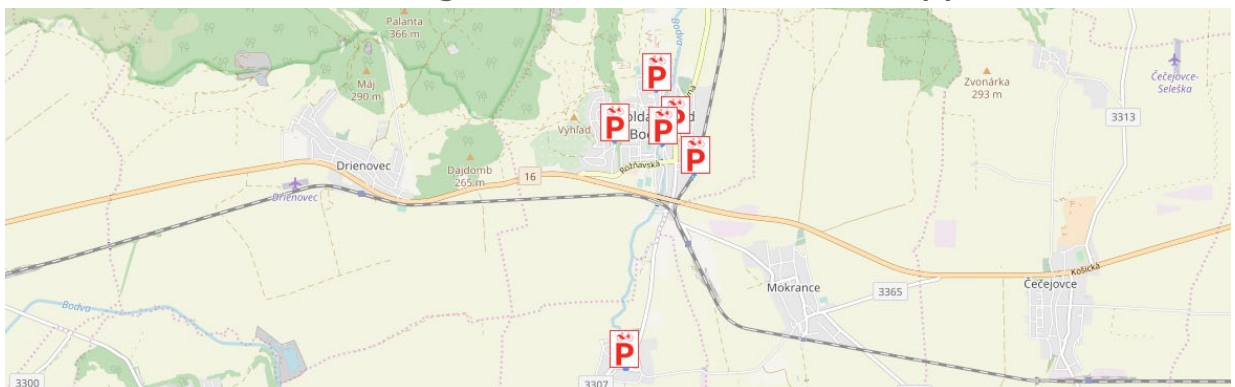
Bike sharing stations in Košice (96)



Bike sharing stations in Trebišov (12)



Bike sharing stations in Moldava nad Bodvou (6)



Bike sharing can be rated as one of the new tourism products in urban destinations, which supports ecotourism development. It reduces traffic in the cities, thereby reducing the air pollution too. It offers a new, easy way of renting a bike and getting to know tourist attractions in the town and its surroundings

2.4. AVAILABLE ECOTOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

The result of the analysis of the ecotourism resources and products in the Košice Region is that there are good conditions for development of ecotourism in the Košice Region. From the aspect of ecosystem service in tourism, the most favourable values belong to the destinations of Slovenský raj, Gemer, Dolný Zemplín, and partially also Tokaj (Medzibodrožie area). All the stakeholders perceive recreational, biodiversity and cultural values as the most significant ecosystem services in the area. Regarding the options of the area development, they especially prefer development of hiking, cycling and water tourism, as well as natural tourism or, alternatively, leaving the area for relaxation and recreation of the locals. The major reasons why the visitors come to the Košice Region include discovering natural environment, cultural heritage and hiking. These facts can be used for defining the key competences of the individual destinations in the Košice Region.

Key competencies of tourism destinations in the Košice Region

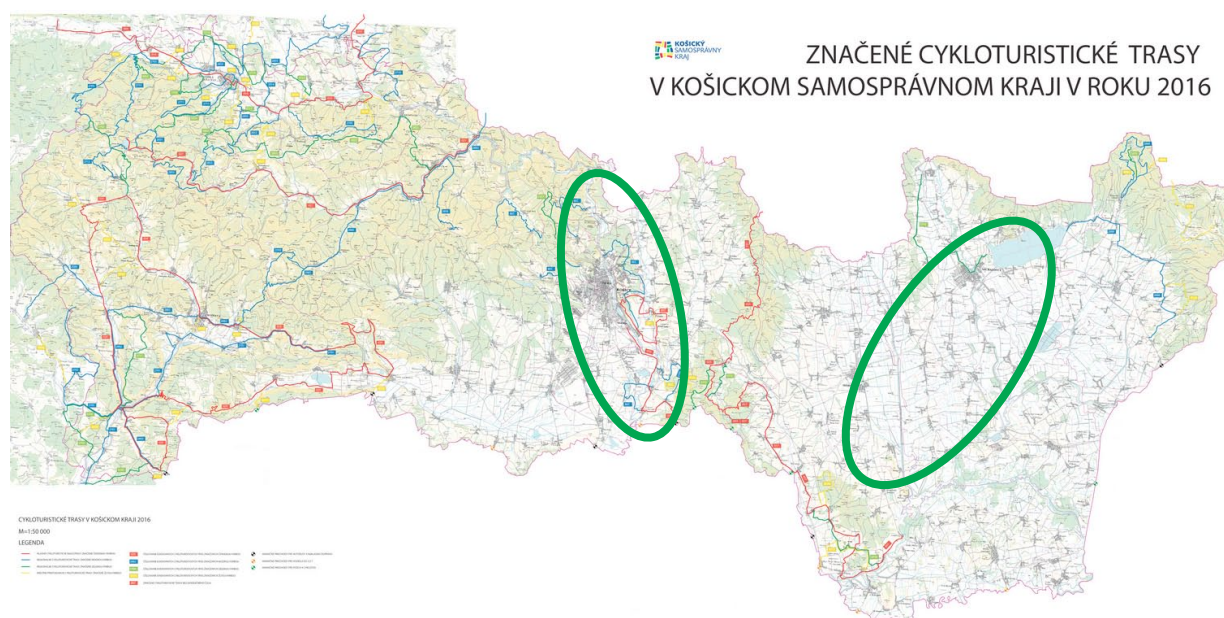
Destination	Key competencies
Slovenský raj	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - natural environment - hiking and sport activities - relaxation
Gemer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - natural environment - hiking and sport activities - sights
Spiš	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural heritage - cultural activities - hiking and sport activities
Košice district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural heritage - cultural activities - relaxation and shopping
Dolný Zemplín	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural heritage - relaxation and recreation - gastronomy
Tokaj	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gastronomic specialties - relaxation and recreation - cultural activities and hiking

Key competencies mean the ability of a destination to use their resources and create a customer value. From the aspect of visitors, the key element is uniqueness of a destination based on the authentic values. Key competencies of the destinations in the Košice Region reflect its potential for the development of ecotourism, which has a positive impact on the area with its economic, social and environmental dimensions. Therefore, it is recommendable to focus on **creation of the products based on the stakeholders´ (locals, businesses and organizations, public sector) cooperation as the essential opportunity for development of ecotourism in the Košice Region.**

The analysis of the infrastructure and cyclo-tourism services has identified several drawbacks in tourism development, including the greatest weakness in the area which is **insufficient infrastructure, transport accessibility and service quality**. Regarding the marked cycling routes, it is advisable to continue with construction of the planned international cycling route Eurovelo 11 that will improve the situation in the destination Košice district, as well as finishing the cycling route ZemplínskaŠírava – Tokaj.

Another prerequisite for development of tourism is good **transport accessibility** and the related transport infrastructure. It is **insufficient**, especially in the destinations Slovenský raj, Gemer and Tokaj. Tourism infrastructure (high quality accommodation and hospitality facilities) is missing mainly in Gemer, Spiš and DolnýZemplín. In the destination of Košice district, most of the stakeholders are missing sport and recreation infrastructure, and a water park.

In the urban destinations of Košice, Trebišov and MoldavanaBodvoubike sharing, which helps ecotourism, has also been developing.



In order to foster ecotourism, however, it is necessary to **improve the infrastructure and the ecotourism-related services, and also to conduct an effective marketing communication about the orientation of the Košice Region on ecotourism.**

3. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The previous research implies that:

- the Košice Region destination has very good preconditions for development of ecotourism,
- ecotourism can be developed in each destination; however, regarding the ecosystem services the best potential is in the destinations of Slovenský raj, Gemer, Dolný Zemplín (surroundings of Zemplínska šírava and Vihorlat), and Tokaj (especially the important area of Medzibodrožie)
- the stakeholders (locals, service providers, self-governments) mostly prefer development of hiking, cycling and water tourism, as well as the development of natural tourism and leaving certain area for relaxation and recreation of the locals,
- the biggest shortcomings of tourism development include insufficient quality of the cycling routes, low transport accessibility, insufficient tourism infrastructure and transport infrastructure, as well as low quality services.

3.1. VISION AND OBJECTIVES

With regard to both primary and secondary research, we assume that in order to increase competitiveness of the Košice Region destination it is advisable to develop ecotourism and support sustainable mobility by application of the following vision:

Vision: The Košice Region as a competitive tourism destination in Central Europe, supportive of development of ecotourism and sustainable mobility

To materialize this vision, we formulate the main objective, the follow-up objectives and the measures to achieve these objectives:

Main objective: Fostering ecotourism and sustainable mobility as a competitive advantage of the Košice Region destination

Partial objective 1:

Supporting creation of ecotourism products in the Košice Region

Measure 1: Defining ecotourism product topics for the destinations in the Košice Region

Partial objective 2:

Completion of infrastructure and services suitable for development of ecotourism

Measure 2: Completion and raising awareness about cyclo-tourist infrastructure

Measure 3: Supporting sustainable mobility of visitors

Partial objective 3:

Marketing activities suitable for support of ecotourism

Measure 4: Creation of electronic distribution of the ecotourist experiences

Measure 5: Integration of marketing communication in ecotourism

Vision: The Košice Region as a competitive tourism destination in Central Europe, supportive of development of ecotourism and sustainable mobility

Main objective: Fostering ecotourism and sustainable mobility as a competitive advantage of the Košice Region destination

Partial objective 1:
Supporting creation of ecotourism products in the Košice Region

Partial objective 2:
Completion of infrastructure and services suitable for development of ecotourism

Partial objective 3:
Marketing activities suitable for support of ecotourism

Measure 1:
Defining ecotourism product topics for the destinations in the Košice Region

Measure 2:
Completion and raising awareness about cyclotourist infrastructure

Measure 3:
Supporting sustainable mobility of visitors

Measure 4:
Creation of electronic distribution of the ecotouristic experiences

Measure 5:
Integration of marketing communication in ecotourism

3.2. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND INTENTIONS

The process of defining the strategic directions and intentions has been based on the conducted analysis of the area potential for the development of ecotourism and the tourism market trends. Taking trends into account allows integration of the external environment elements in the strategic framework and thus securing relevance of the proposed measures in tourism market.

For better practical application, we present an example of good practice in a foreign country along with each measure. We are aware that with considering the specifics of each destination, it is impossible to copy foreign experience. Good practice examples only serve as an inspiration for the proposed measures.

Partial objective 1: Supporting creation of the ecotourism products in the Košice Region

Supporting the creation of products by the regional tourism organization Košice Region Turizmus will allow coordination of the individual district tourism organizations (or other subjects) and ensure that the products are complementary and built on each other. That will also motivate the visitors to see more areas in the Košice Region and to prolong their stay (i.e. increase the number of overnight stays). Product lines coordination should be based on the product topics we propose for the individual destinations of the Košice Region in relation to the key competencies identified in the analytical part. In this part we work with all destinations in the Košice Region because in the long run, ecotourism can be developed in each destination.

Measure 1: Defining ecotourism product topics for the destinations in the Košice Region

Regarding the identified key competencies of the individual destinations, we define various ecotourism product topics for the destinations of the Košice Region. These product topics are followed by creation of products in the form of experiences (specified in the action plan proposal), because at present visitors view a product as something they can experience. Product as an experience in the destination evokes unforgettable memories and emotions, and as such motivates for the repeated visit.



SLOVENSKÝ RAJ

As for the ecosystem services, Slovenský raj/Slovak Paradise has **very good** conditions for exploitation of its territory for the development of ecotourism. With regard to the current situation in tourism development of this destination, we recommend directing the products to the southern part of the Slovenský raj national park. Key competencies of the destination include:

- attractive natural environment suitable for hiking,
- sport activities,
- relaxation.



More and more visitors seek wild and untouched nature. Therefore, we have created the product topic Hiking and wilderness of the Paradise for the Slovenský raj destination.

Product topic	Hiking and wilderness of the Paradise
Experiences (educational)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Experiential visits to the unique places in Slovenský raj, along and beyond the hiking trails
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Groomed and marked hiking trails · Spots suitable for watching unique fauna and flora and carrying out specific activities (e. g. ice climbing in the gorges, rafting, via ferrates, horse riding) · Quality services of the accommodation and hospitality facilities (wellness and healthy cuisine) · Trained local guides · Transport accessibility (Summer bus, Ski bus, Ice express) · Information
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · RTOKošiceregiónturizmus · LTOSlovenský raj & Spiš · Self-governments in the area · Administration of the Slovenský raj/Slovak Paradise national park · Klub slovenskýchturistov/Slovak hiking club · Accommodation facilities · Catering facilities · Local guides · Local residents · Železničná spoločnosť Slovensko/ Railway Company Slovakia · Eurobus, p.l.c.
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Budget of the LTOSlovenský raj & Spiš (local DMO) · Budget of the RTO (regional DMO) · Microgrants within the scheme Terra Incognita · Budgets of organizations and business entities · Other

In the destination, it is necessary to:

- identify and mark” unique „spots which allow watching their fauna and flora and carrying specific ecotourist activities
- support products throughout the season (summer, winter and off season),
- transform Kláštorisko into an eco-tourist spot,
- train local guides in the new product topic,
- educate visitors,
- concentrate on increasing the quality of services (mainly accommodation and gastronomic),
- improve transport accessibility of the area (continue the Ice express, improve connections to the north and east of Slovenský raj/Slovak Paradise).

Good practice example:

Local tourist guides focused on health hiking (health hiking guides). Such guides are a popular hiking supplement, e.g. in Germany. They can enrich hiking with proper exercise; adjust choice of terrain to the preferences of the group and to provide useful tips for daily exercising. Apart from tourist guide qualification, they provide health content in the field of prevention and support through active exercise, transfer of knowledge and change of behaviour in the environment specific for hiking. The goal of such guides is to mediate not only more exercise, but also positive experience during and through hiking.



GEMER

From the point of view of ecosystem services, Gemer **has very** good preconditions for the development of ecotourism. The key competencies include:

- Natural environment
- Suitable for hiking and sports activities
- With the possibility of visiting monuments



The trend in tourism is also the connection of spiritual values – „spirituality “with cultural and technical monuments. Gemer has excellent preconditions from this point of view, as natural tourist routes and protected areas intersect with the historic Gothic Way and the Technical Railway (Via Magna) in a small area. At the same time, Gemer has the largest concentration of cycle paths in the Košice region. For these reasons, it is appropriate to focus products on Cross thematic roads with the possibility of visiting on foot and by bike.

Product topic	Cross thematic roads with the possibility of visiting on foot and by bike
Experiences (aesthetic)	Ambivalence of wild nature, mining and gothic monuments
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · authentic fauna and flora · interesting cultural monuments (Gothic road) and crafts · mining history (Iron road – ViaFerraria, Magna) and geopark · caves(Gombasecka, Ochtinskaaragonit, Domica, Krásnohorska) · groomed and marked hiking roads and bike paths · cycling friendly accommodation · local tour guides – in nature and history · transport accessibility (Gemerexpress, cross-border cooperation with Hungary)
Engaged subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · KOOCR Košice region tourism · OOCR Gemer · Municipality in area · Gemer education centre · National Park Slovenskýkras administration · National park Muráň plain administration · Slovak administration of caves · Club of Slovak tourists (Gemer group) · Christian institutions · Cycling routes administration · Accommodation facilities · Hospitality facilities · Cultural institutions (museums, galleries) · Local citizens · Civic association Gothic road · Railways Slovakia
Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Budget of RTO · Microgrants in the scheme TerraIncognita · Projects for cross-border cooperation SR - HU · Budget of non-profit organizations · Budget for entrepreneurial subjects · Other

The following is needed in destination:

- establish mutual communication and cooperation with engaged subjects managing the protected areas (National park Slovak karst administration, National park Muran plain administration), caves (Slovak administration of caves, thematic roads (Gothic road, Civic association), church institutions (church opening), travel carriers (Railroads, bus carriers) and others to create „cross“ products
- improve the layout and marking the hiking and cycling trails
- focus on quality accommodation and hospitality services
- motivate accommodation facilities to provide cyclist friendly services
- (bike friendly hotels), and so prolong the average length of stays in destination
- Provide marketing communication of products
- Improve transportation accessibility to tourism attractions (connecting Hungary)
- Provide trainings for tour guides

Good practice example:

The product topic follows and at the same time expands the project MEDIEVAL, which was implemented in Košice region in 2007 – 2013 thanks to the Programme cross-border cooperation Hungary – Slovakia. This project mapped the existing potential and attractiveness of tourism on cultural and industrial heritage routes. The proposed product topic expands the products with a natural character, which is the main motive for visiting the destination, and so is aimed at ecotourists.

SPIŠ

From the point of view of ecosystem services, the destination Spiš has **good** preconditions for providing ecosystem tourism services. The key competences include:

- cultural monuments,
- cultural activities,
- hiking and sports activities.



In terms of high potential cultural heritage, we suggest their interpretation through interesting, educational and memorable experiences, where tourists are not only the passive observers but they participate in their creation. For this reason, we propose the product topic Involving the visitor into nature and culture, for the destination Spiš. We also suggest to develop it with mainly monuments inscribed in world cultural heritage UNESCO.

Product topic	Involving the visitor into nature and culture
Experiences (co-creation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Getting to know culture and nature with sustainable and interactive ways
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · authentic and interesting stories about historic monuments and mining · connection of cultural and natural potential of destination with interactive way · possibility of renting bikes and e-bikes · educational workshops for working with historic materials · technologies for „involving“ visitor – expanded and virtual reality · Technologies – 3D printers enable to gain personalized memory · Educating visitors · Local inhabitants as tour guides of history and nature
Engaged subject	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · RTOKošice region tourism · LTO Slovak paradise & Spiš · Municipality in region · Mining museum · SNM – Spiš museum in Levoča · Cultural monuments providers · Cultural events organizers · Local tour guides · Local inhabitants · Carriers · Technological organizations
Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Budget OOCR Slovak paradise & Spiš · Budget KOOCR · Microgrants within the scheme Terra Incognita · Budgets of cultural monuments providers · Budget of cultural events · Budget entrepreneurial subjects · Other

The following is needed in destination:

- Collect authentic and interesting stories about cultural monuments with the help of local inhabitants,
- To digitize marked cycle paths and direct the visitors on cultural monuments,
- Provide basic infrastructure for cyclists (place for a safe storage of bikes at cultural monuments, service network, e-bike chargers),
- Create application using expanded reality to „restore“ most interesting cultural monuments (e.g. building Spiš castle with application on mobile phone screen) and historical events in natural environment (e.g. battle over Spiš castle)
- Enable designing and printing personalized souvenirs for visitors in selected places,
- To train local tour guides in using proposed technological solutions (expanded reality, virtual reality, 3D printing),
- Complete additional infrastructure (e.g. benches)

Good practice example:

KOŠICE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Destination Košice and its surrounding as a whole has **reasonable** potential for ecosystem tourism services. However, the city centre with its parks, outskirts, which are connected to natural environment of forest park has potential for the development of ecotourism. It is about the development of ecological urban tourism and suburban recreation. We consider the following to be the key competencies from the tourism point of view:

- cultural monuments,
- cultural activities
- rest and shopping



To create a product as ecotourism experience in the urban destination Košice and its surrounding we suggest using the organizations of events and microevents achievable by ecological transport. It is a follow up product to the offer of cultural-historical heritage, which is in the city Košice suitably developed. For this reason, we propose as a product topic Active discovery of nature in the city and its surrounding.

Product topic	Active discovery of nature in the city and its surrounding
Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Finding nature and sports activities with ecological transport connected with (micro) events
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · easily accessible natural environment (parks, forest parks, water courses and areas) · groomed and marked hiking trails and cycle paths · built additional infrastructure in nature (benches, tables, rest places) · bike-sharing system · organizing (micro)events in nature · interactive/ mobile game · created cashers and information about them · possibilities of „searching“in nature
Engaged subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · RTOKošice region tourism · LTOKošice tourism · city and other municipalities in the area · City forests Košice · Transport company of the city Košice · Cycle route managers · KECY – Košice cyclo-routes · Local tour guides
Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · budget LTOKošice Tourism · budget RTO · microgrants within the scheme Terra Incognita · budget of the city Košice · budget of city forests Košice · other

The following is needed in destination:

- passport and subsequently build the additional infrastructure in parks and forest park,
- to build and mark the cycle paths in Košice and its surroundings (one of the biggest shortcomings found in analytical part) with the possibility of adding the trails (mainly from the point of view of young visitors),
- revitalize watercourses and areas and build water tourism infrastructure,
- develop existing bike-sharing services,
- organize (micro)events in natural environment (parks, water courses and parks),
- to create pre-conditions for development of transformative tourism,
- to create/ integrate game elements into mobile application,
- to use gamification, geocaching a questing to enrich the destination 's product.

Good practice:

Secret City Trails. It is a platform for various adventure games in the cities, which are created mostly by local inhabitants and are intended for both foreign and domestic visitors. The target group can be individuals, couples, families with children, also colleagues in team-building events. The main objective of the project is to introduce cities in an unconventional way, entertain the players and take them to interesting places. At website of secretcitytrails.com the game enthusiasts can choose from a wide range of places, which offer adventure games. According to the information of the website the first step is to find a place and game, the visitors are interested in. Games are charged and their prices are between 10 – 30 €. After paying for the game, the information and the link are sent to the email address, so the players can progress in a game. The quests, puzzles, quizzes gradually accompany the players at the target place, while the players can try to finish the game in the shortest possible time, and rank in the winners table, or enjoy the game without a time limit.

DOLNÝ ZEMPLÍN

From the point of view of ecosystem services, the destination Dolný Zemplín has **very good** preconditions mainly near Zemplínska šírava and Vihorlat. The key competences include:

- cultural monuments,
- rest and recreation
- gastronomy



Destination is characterized by natural character with significant function of water areas (Zemplínska šírava, Morské oko). The proposed products in this destination should aim at improvement of sustainability of water resources which are intended for rest and recreation while assessing the cultural potential as the opposite of mass tourism in this area. Therefore, we propose the product topic Educational tourism and water tourism.

Product topic	Educational tourism and water tourism
Experience (educational)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Connecting active relax with education= „stop, think, listen& enjoy“
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · groomed and marked hiking trails and water routes, · educational trails and educational tools (forest bath, waterway, cultural trail, wine trail, beekeeping trail · cultural monuments (Vinniansky castle, manor houses) and natural attractions (Seninanske ponds) · jewish tradition · gastronomic tourism (Michalovský, Sobranský wine region) · authentic information about history and natural attractions from local inhabitants · organizing small events · local tour guides
Engaged subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · KOČR Košice regional tourism · Zemplín tourism organization · Municipality in areas · Forests of Slovak republic – Sobrance branch · Administration CHKO Vihorlat Protected Landscape area · Slovak water management association · SOS Birdlife · Cultural and educational institutions · Viniarsky cultural and wine organization · Local inhabitants
Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · budget Zemplín tourism organization · budget KOČR · Microgrants within the scheme Terralncognita · Budget of entrepreneurial subjects · others

The following is needed in destination:

- collect authentic information from local inhabitants,
- create the database of natural, historic, cultural information about destination,
- build interactive educating hiking and cycling trails in connection with Concept of the development of cycling tourism in the target area of Zemplínska šírava and surrounding (2019) with motives
 - o forest bath – already supported in project scheme Terra Incognita
 - o Beekeeping nature trail – Vínne
 - o Water route – educating about the meaning of water in nature, building water dam Zemplínska šírava
 - o Cultural trail – with the use of authentic repair of the castle Vínne, wooden churches
 - o Stellar path – observation of the sky in one of the darkest places in Slovakia with the use of observatory Kolonickom sedle (PSK).
 - o Footsteps of the railway Remetské Hámre – Morské oko
 - o Partisan sidewalk
- Supporting the products focused on gastronomic tourism, horse riding, fishing (catch and let go), bird and nature observation, water tourism (Laborec, Latorica, Uh, Bodrog, Zemplínskašírava),
- Completing the exhibition of additional infracture in the area of Zemplínska šírava (Boulevard – Klokočov, Walk on Šírave – Kaluža),
- connect water tourism Tokaj.

Good practice example:

EcoSistema Verbano – project that has created 6 thematic trails around the lake LaggioMaggiore (water, cultural, memory, craft, sunny, stellar), which enable the visitors know the destination from different view – slowly at their pace. Thematic trails enable to stop, think, listen, and enjoy the nature and scenery. Important outcome is scientific database of information about nature, traditions, history, monument destinations.

TOKAJ

Destination Tokaj, mainly Medzibodrožie, has **very good** preconditions for the ecotourism development based on ecosystem services. We include the following key competencies:

- gastronomic specialities,
- rest and recreation,
- cultural activities and hiking

gastronomic specialities

rest and recreation

cultural activities and hiking

Western part of the Tokaj destination is visited for gastronomic specialities associated with wine production. From the ecotourism point of view, however Medzibodrožie has important potential with its unique fauna and flora with possibilities of discovering water. For this reason, we propose Agritourism on bicycle and water as the product topic.

Product topic	Agritourism on bicycle and water
Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Wine tasting, beekeeping, bicycle ride, fruit growing, ecological cruise
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · building cyclist infrastructure (cyclo-trails, additional infrastructure, charging stations for e bikes) · information on possibility of renting the bikes (mobile app) · horse keepers – trips on horses · built water infrastructure (boat renting, ports) · local wineries, quality gastronomy (fruit, herbs) · event management · travel accessibility (Tokaj cyclo-express, buses), connection with Hungry · possibilities to spend time with children
Engaged subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · RTO Košice tourism region · Municipalities in area · Tokaj wine route · Tokaj Regnum · Local wine producers · Civic association Sosna · Cycle trails management · Boat rent (e.g. Alcea) · Railways Slovakia
Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Budget RTO · Microgrants within the scheme TerraIncognita · others

The following is needed in destination:

- to motivate small entrepreneurs to offer their own products (wine, fruit, beekeeping) on market
- to create mobile application with information about bike rent services
- to choose suitable areas for water tourism infrastructure
 - o entry/ exit places (port)
 - o shipyard
- make recommendations for specification of water way (route duration, markings),
- Improve transport accessibility of destinations –intramodality, connection with Hungary with cycle path
- Create new possibilities of spending time of children (as an addition to wine tasting, adapting the interpretation on beekeeping for children)
- to utilize volunteering camps for tourism development

Good practice example:

Food&WineTastingHoliday in Slovenia



Partial objective 2:

Complete infrastructure and services suitable for the development of ecotourism

The analytical part shows that one of the main shortcomings of tourism development in the Košice region is transport infrastructure. Sufficiently built, marked and promoted cycle paths, together with educational and hiking trails are the basis for the development of ecotourism products, based on specified product topic in Measure 1. Another significant shortcoming from the point of view of visitors, residents and service providers is the transport accessibility of tourism destinations. This weakness can be improved by promoting sustainable visitor mobility.

Measure 2:

Completing and increasing the awareness of cycling infrastructure

The Update of the Strategy for the Development of Cycling Transport and Cycling in KSK (2015) results in the following tasks in terms of completing the cycling tourism infrastructure:

- support the maintenance and modernization of existing cycle paths through the renewal of cycle signs and surface treatment,
- support the creation of information and educational boards on the main cycle paths, including additional infrastructure such as rest areas, shelters, etc.

Given the current state and proposed product topics, we propose the focus of support for maintenance, modernization and improvement of additional equipment, especially in the following destinations:

- Gemer,
- Spiš,
- Dolný Zemplín and
- Tokaj.

At the same time, it is appropriate to take into account the trend of electric bicycles and build charging stations. It is advisable to use the manual WP3 EcotourismPlanning – Guidelines for Sustainable Bicycle Tourism (2019). At the same time, it is important to raise awareness of cycling routes throughout the Košice region:

- The link on the website www.kosiceregion.com and the mobile application KošiceRegion on google maps with integrated cycle maps from cycle portal Košice region <http://ke.cykloportal.sk/>.
- Creation of the actual printed cycling guide of the KošiceRegion

Measure 3:

Supporting the sustainable visitor's mobility

The transport accessibility of individual destinations as well as the quality of the transport infrastructure is insufficient. From the point of view of the development of ecotourism, we propose a focus on intermodal (bicycle + train + bus + boat) and integrated transport supporting sustainable mobility.

We are based on the Košice Region's Sustainable Mobility Plan (2020) with the vision "Everything will be easily accessible to all in the East". The plan identifies the following objectives:

- the gradual but fundamental transformation of the railways into a core system in the main directions of regional public transport, more efficient use of funds for suburban bus transport,
- non-motorized transport will be connected to the elaborated project of the skeletal network of bicycle routes in the Košice Region.

At present, these are mainly tourist trains Ice Express, Gemer Express and Tokaj Cycle Express, whose services we also count on the proposed product topics. In case of inaccessible railway infrastructure, it is also possible to use modified buses or minibuses with external bicycle stands.

To support the development of ecotourism, we propose to introduce free, or reasonable transport of bicycles by public transport – trains and buses. We are also based on the Strategy for development of cycling transportation and cycling in KSK (2015), which supports projects of integrated transport of bicycles and related modes of transport (Expanding of transport possibilities for cycling from the towns to further locations, attractive hiking areas, which are more difficult to access by railway and bus.

We consider the shuttle transport mainly for tourists as convenient. At present, these are mainly tourist trains Ice Express, Gemer Express, Tokaj Cycle express, we count on, when proposing product topics. In case of inaccessible railway infrastructure, it is possible to use modified buses or minibuses with external bicycle stands.

Good practice examples:

Fahrrad2Go(Reims-Murr-Kreis – Germany) – The aim of the project is a safe and reliable connection between public buses and bicycles. In this way, public transport should be strengthened and made more attractive as an alternative to road transport. The project uses innovative systems for assembling bicycles on buses. Thanks to the rear support structure, it is possible to transport up to 10 bicycles per bus free of charge in daily regular transport - up to 5 bicycles in the bus and 5 bicycles at the rear.



Bike express (Fassa-Fiemme – Italy) – The product is intended for families with children, cyclists who are not in shape and for everyone who wants to discover the natural and cultural

attractions of the destination and at the same time rely on efficient transport back to the place where they are accommodated. Bike Express offers 16 stops where cyclists can get on or off the bus. The frequency of such a shuttle service is 3 times a day and the ticket price is 10 EUR for an adult and 5 EUR for children.

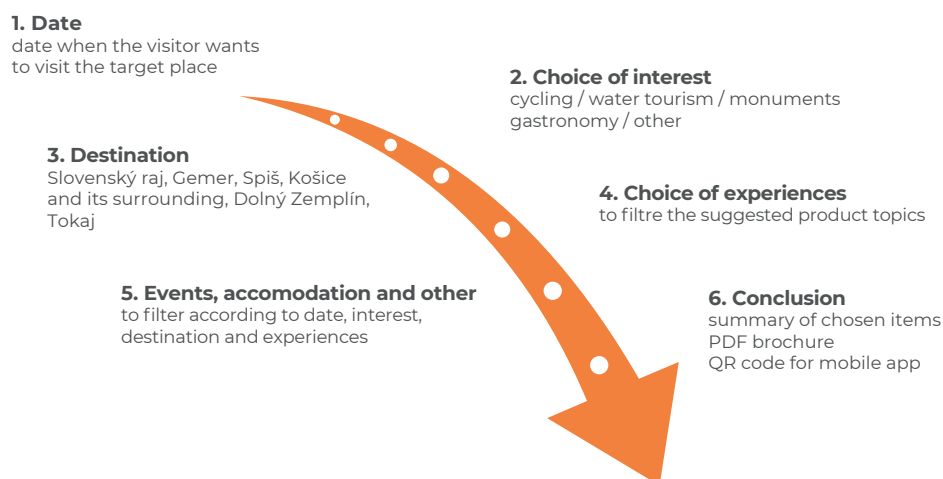


Partial objective 3:
Carry out marketing activities suitable for support of ecotourism

Distribution and marketing communication are associated with product creation. In this context, we consider it necessary to emphasize that even though service providers distribute and communicate their product separately, it is necessary to distribute and communicate the complex product of the destination uniformly. At the same time, due to dynamic changes in the market and the rapid development of technologies, distribution and marketing communication are focused on connecting traditional approaches with digital ones.

Measure 4:
Creating an electronic distribution of Eco touristic experiences

Currently, up to 80% of visitors prefer to search and create a product on their own (BiosphereTourism, 2020). It is therefore not appropriate to create and distribute a product as a fixed package of services. Due to this fact, we propose to use a system of recommendations implemented in the website and mobile application of the Košice Region when distributing ecotourism products. The referral system will make it easier for visitors to find and navigate the region's products by displaying only relevant information. Such a system makes it possible to filter products based on information from the visitor, provide relevant information, and thus facilitate the entire decision-making and booking process.



Good practice example:

System of proposals integrated into website of destination Davos-Klosters.

**Measure 4:****To integrate marketing communication of ecotourism**

To integrate the marketing communication of ecotourism of the Košice Region, we propose the connection of traditional (offline) and digital (online) communication, which will ensure that traditional means should be in synergy with new interactive elements, where the visitor is not only the recipient of information but also participates in their creation (so-called user-generated content - UGC - User Generated Content).

Given the proposed product as an experience, we recommend that marketing communication uses emotions and is focused on all phases of the visitor's shopping process (information retrieval and booking, stay and activities in the destination, return).

Phase of searching and booking:

- to focus attention mainly on web portal of the destination www.kosiceregion.com
 - o create section Eco touristic experiences in the region and promote offered products
 - o support connecting the reviews from the portal TripAdvisor and Foursquare and portal of Eco touristic experiences section
 - o support creating the images and videos from the use of the Eco touristic
 - o use the social wall on the homepage of the portal (landingpage) – integration of display „#“ with the name of destination from Facebook and Instagram
- Coordinate content Ecotourism in websites of local organizations in region

Phase of staying in the destination:

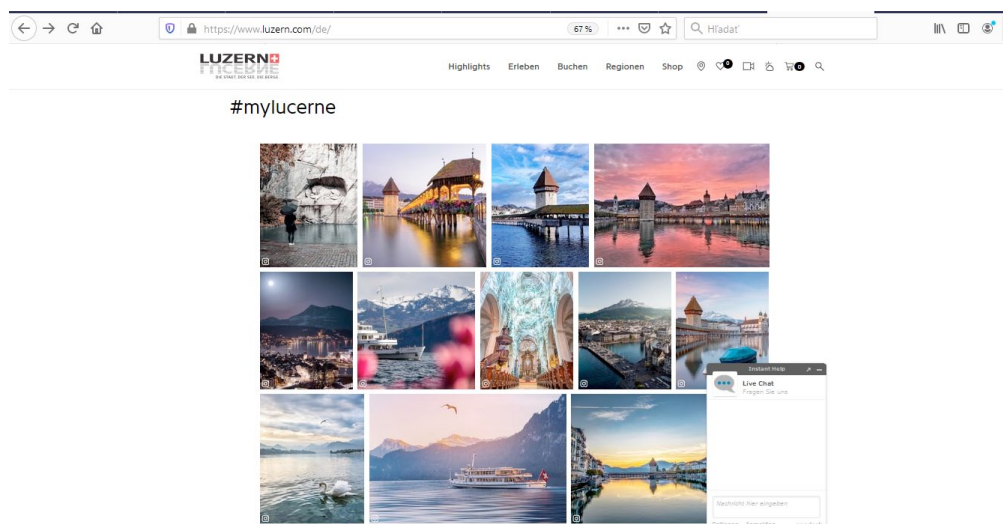
- Focus on mobile app mainly in Košice Region
 - o Geomarketing – active use of localized services on informing the visitors about offers in the area with sending push notifications to applications
 - o Support connection of social media in application with the objective to motivate visitors to evaluate and write reviews to their ecotourism experiences, as localize „check-in“ in places, where the products are offered

Phase of return:

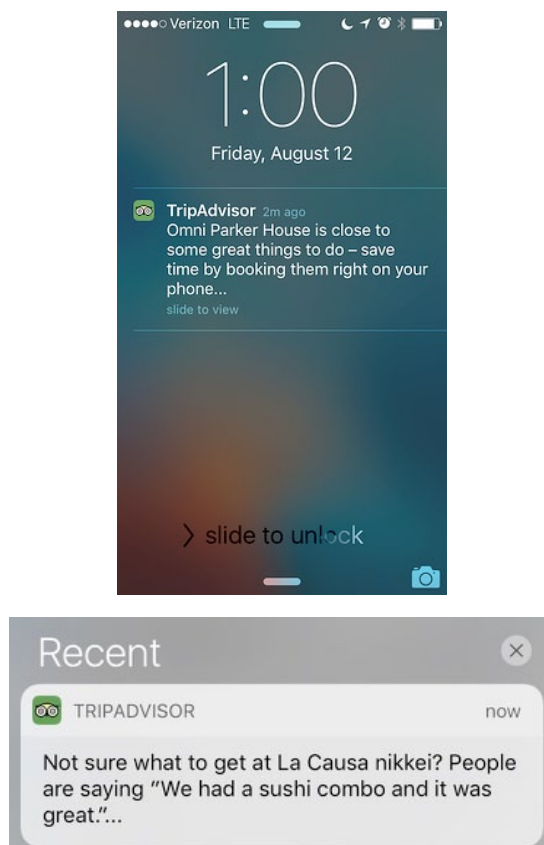
- Active communication with visitors with online tools (web portal, newsletter)
- Provide feedback – in case of increased number of reviews and comments applied online reputation management with integration of sensitivity management

Good practice examples:

Integration of social wall into web portal of destination Luzern: www.luzern.com



Use of geo marketing with push notification in application – TripAdvisor



Source: <http://info.localytics.com>

4. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

In order to address vision and objectives we define key actors and stakeholder in order motivate them. They will play the role of important components; within the framework of their own responsibilities they will participate in fulfilling strategic directions and implement the actions.

4.1. KEY ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS IN ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The involvement of key actors and stakeholders is proposed taking into consideration following:

- actors defined based on the field research,
- scope of activities in the territory,
- co-operation with regional tourism organisation (RTO) Košice Region Tourism,
- importance of actor according to proposed product lines

Proposed key actors and stakeholders are as following:



In order to meet the strategical objectives, it is necessary to define the role of particular actors. We will apply the optics of three layers (as it is visualized) in the scheme above:

Leader and co-ordinator:Regional Tourism Organisation KošiceTourism Region

- co-ordinates product development, distribution and communication of products along with local tourism organisations
- creates joint system of reservations integrated with recommendation system linked with existing systems of local tourism organisations
- integrated communication of particular eco touristic products in the region
- communication with external partners on regional level (e. g. Slovak railways, Slovak tourist club, Slovak forest etc.)
- financial support for eco-tourism development in the framework of existing schemes and mechanisms
- in the destinations where local tourism organisation have not been established, takes the role of the leader

Stakeholders implementing the actions:Local tourism organisations

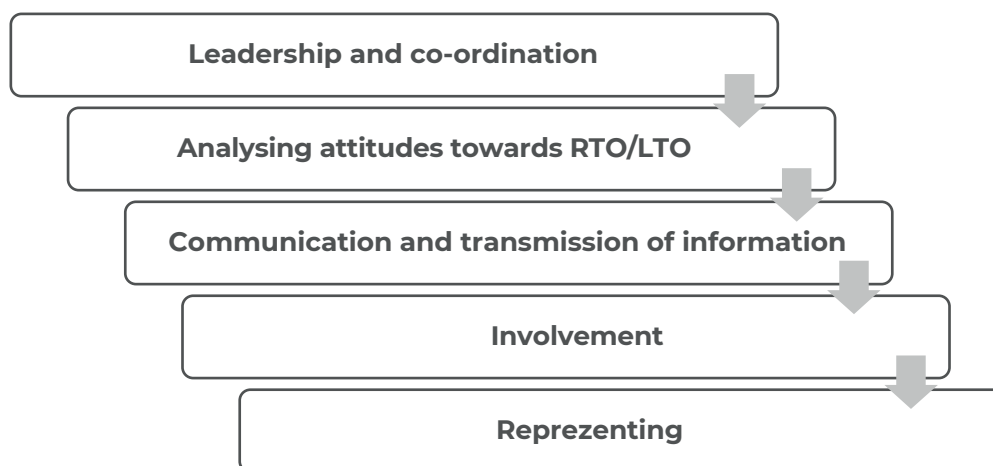
- develop product and invest into infrastructure in line with proposed product themes in co-operation with local residents, businesses, organisations and municipalities
- distribute and communicate the eco-tourism products in the territory
- represent the interests of its members in relations to regional tourism organization
- financially support ecotourism development

Active members:Local residents, entrepreneurs, organisations and municipalities

- co-operate with local tourism organisation in product and infrastructure development,
- actively participate on discussions with local tourism organisations,
- they initiate program solving in the territory,
- project development with the aim to apply for external funds on their implementation

4.2. INSTITUTIONAL ACTIONS

Among necessary institutional action in the framework of eco-tourism development we involve initiation and support of co-operative actions of tourism stakeholders in the region. To fulfil the actions, we suggest following step-by-step approach:



Leadership and co-ordination – first pre-condition of efficient co-operation in the Košice region is accepting the fact, that Regional tourism organisation (RTO) is a leader in tourism development in the territory. That is why RTO Košice Tourism Region needs sufficient human capital in terms of professional and qualified staff as well as sufficient budget. We recommend that RTO continuously monitors the trends and strive for long-term improvement. The analogical managerial implications are valid also for particular local tourism organisations (LTO). that should act as a leader within their territory. The preconditions for qualified staff, that is in some LTO problematic to ensure and sufficient budget is also appropriate.

Analysing the attitudes towards organisational performance serves as a warning system to prevent possible problems that might arise. We propose that RTO and LTOs will quarterly disseminate to its members and partners anonymous on-line questionnaire with the aim to identify the satisfaction of members with the co-ordinating body. At the same time the members should have an opportunity to provide the suggestion for improvement. The above-mentioned feedback should provide to the organisations involved reflections on their performance and to modify its behaviour in order to enhance co-operation.

Communication and transmission of information. Regular flow of information and transparent communication is one of the key elements of promoting the co-operation in the destination. That is the reason why we stress the importance of pro-active and regular communication messages to be transmitted from tourism organisations at local and regional level to its members regarding their intentions, activities performed and potential activities as well as about benefits and synergies as an outcome of the co-operation. Among the benefits targeting of more massive targets groups, cumulation of more substantial financial resources, lowering the costs and enhancing the marketing efficiency should be mentioned. One of the managerial tools that are applicable are members meetings organize each four months (quarterly). Daily communication plays a significant role. That is why we propose closed groups on social media (e. g. groups in Facebook, group in WhatsApp), eventually more

sophisticated software such as MS Teams, utilization of extranet on web site of organisation or utilization of destination managerial information system (e.g. Deskline).


Involvement. In order to involve a member in active co-operation network, each member needs to be recognized and the voice is listened within the network. Therefore, we recommend to involve stakeholders in marketing activities, active participation in planning and product development, assess to data from managerial information system, participation on training programs, participation on study trips. In this case local residents play an considerable role, since they contribute to “colour local” (local atmosphere).

Representing in contact with third parties. The willingness to participate in co-operative actions will be stronger if the leading/coordinating organisation (RTO or LTO) has a strong position and thus a significant bargaining power and strong lobby (e. g. towards strong organisations of public sector, big transportation companies – Slovak railways etc.).

Best practice example:

Communication and transfer of information via organisational extranet



	ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES	MEMBER RESOURCES	MEMBER EXTRANET	EVENTS	CONTACT US	JOIN NOW
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MEMBER EXTRANET

We're excited to have a new online tool for members: Destination Greater Victoria's Member Extranet!

LOGIN

All active, primary contacts in our database have received an email from Destination Greater Victoria with a username and temporary password to access the Member Extranet.

The Member Extranet is a secure site where members can view and edit their account information, including contacts, website listings, social media links and more.

Members can access their own Benefits Summary, which showcases many of the results included in our annual Member Report Card:

- Mentions in articles and publications
- Mentions on Facebook and other social channels
- Mentions in member and consumer eNewsletters
- Destination Greater Victoria Events attended
- Social activity mentions via Twitter

Future phases will include the ability to add and edit images, logos, videos and amenities. You'll also be able to view statistics for website listings, in-kind contributions, coupons and special offer listings, advertising opportunities and FAMs/site inspections you participated in.

Participation of local inhabitants –ZermattInsider

Project Zermatt Insider “motivates local inhabitants to strengthen their patriotism, openness and cordiality. Spontaneous approach towards visitors is enhanced and supporting visitor with passing the information e.g. on the streets, ski slopes or hiking path is highly welcomed. Local inhabitants are encouraged to role play. They are pretending to be photographs which are taking pictures of tourists so they can return home with joint picture. Friendly and hospital local people are in the destination Zermatt strong motivation for visitors to return and to be loyal (repeat visits).

5. ACTION PLAN PROPOSAL

To implement the strategic framework, we compile a draft action plan that specifies the objectives, determines the responsibility and time horizon for their fulfilment. We conceive the action plan as a set of tactical tasks that can be fulfilled in the short term (1-3 years).

5.1. PRIORITY ACTIONS AND PROJECTS

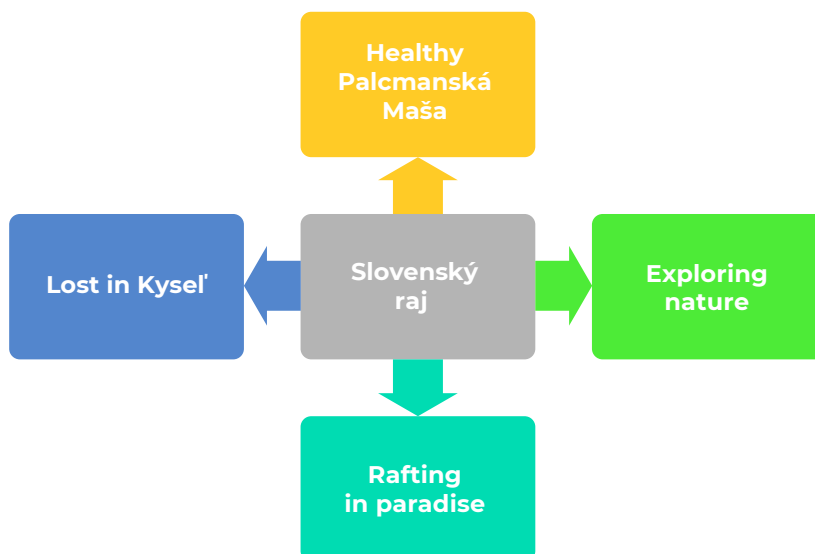
The implementation of the strategic framework requires the identification of priority actions and projects that will contribute to the development of ecotourism in destinations in the Košice Region. To implement the action plan in practice, we specify priority actions and projects aimed at:

- development of ecotourism products in the Košice Region,
- infrastructure suitable for the development of ecotourism,
- Marketing activities suitable for promoting ecotourism.

Priority actions and projects related to sub-objective 1: Promoting the development of ecotourism products in the Košice Region

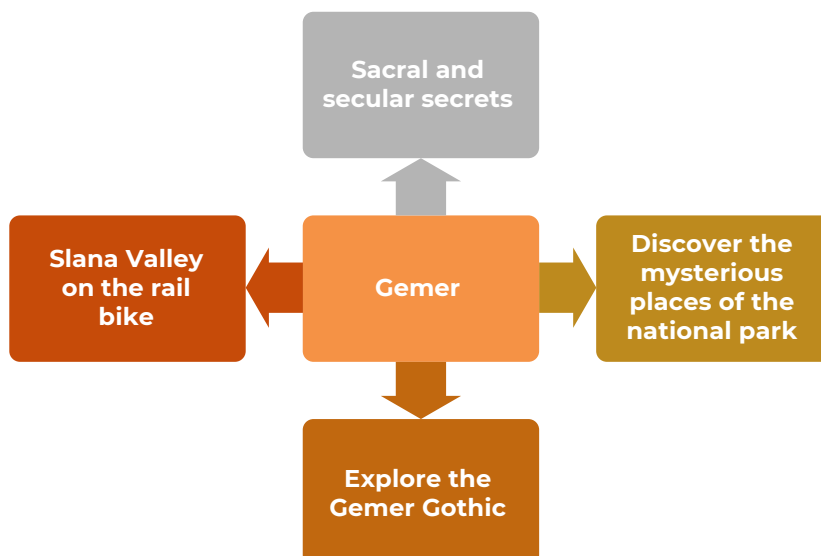
For the specification of sub-objective 1 and its measures Defining Eco-tourism product themes for the Košice Region destinations, we propose specific products and their description. Simultaneously, we specify the operative tasks, responsibilities and deadlines.

Slovenský raj – product development



Area	Slovak Paradise National Park – Palcmanška Maša water reservoir	Slovak Paradise National Park - Gačovská skala	Slovak Paradise National Park- Prielom Hornádu canyon	Slovak Paradise National Park– Kysel' George and Ferrata
Product characteristics and specifications	Healthy Palcmanšká Maša: - completion of tourism infrastructure (electric boat, benches) - gastronomy including fishing	Exploring nature: - guided trips to the Gačovská skala with local guides - organized trips focused on other unique places of the Slovak Paradise with professional guides from the Administration of the Slovak Paradise National Park	Rafting in paradise: - extension of the Hornád river rafting from 12 km to 14 km - new rafting rental service and transfer logistics (start – exit)	Lost in Kysel': - an authentic experience of exploring nature - restoring the ferrata that it will copy the natural character of the river
Responsibility	ošice regional DMO (RTO), Slovenský raj & Spiš local DMO (LTO)	Administration of the Slovak Paradise NP, Slovenský raj & Spiš local DMO (LTO), Dedinky and Stratená municipalities	Smižany municipality, Administration of the Slovak Paradise NP, Slovenský raj & Spiš local DMO (LTO)	Administration of the Slovak Paradise NP
Deadline	2021	2021	2022	2022

Gemer – product development



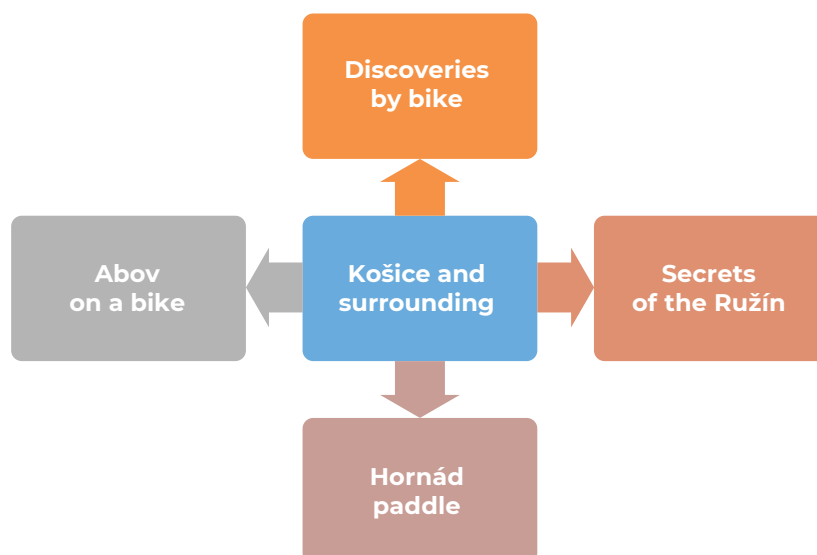
Area	Rožňava	Krásnohorská Dlhá lúka	Gothic churches in certain areas	Rožňava – Betliar - Dobšiná
Product characteristics and specifications	Sacral and secular secrets: - the history of the Rožňava diocese (tour of the historical part of the diocese) - the Way of the Cross (restoration of the pilgrimage site, combination of history and art) - Rožňava Watchtower (view of the surroundings)	Discover the mysterious places of the national park: - exploring the national park with a guide (fauna, flora, caves) - cycle guide with thematic routes - support adaptation of accommodation facilities to „bike-friendly“ - shuttle services with bicycle transport	Explore the Gemer Gothic: - make Gothic churches more accessible to visitors (Štítnik, Rožňava, Ochtná, Kocel'ovce)	Slana Valley on the rail bike: - create unique attractions for visitors, - the attraction for families and cyclists - fauna and flora observation
Responsibility	municipality Rožňava, Košice regional DMO (RTO)	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Slovak Karst National Park Directorate	churches, Civic association Gotická cesta	ZSSR - Railways of the Slovak Republic, Košice regional DMO (RTO), private entrepreneur
Deadline	2021	2022	2022	2023

Spiš – tvorba produktov



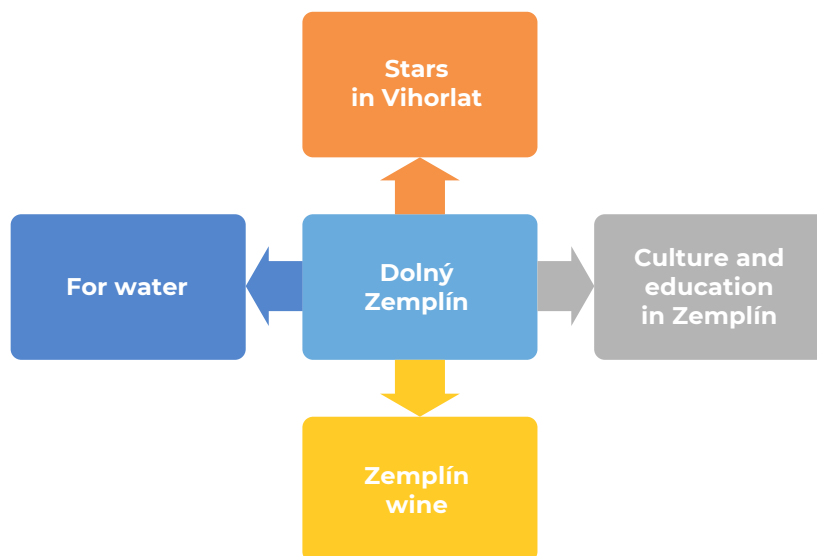
Area	Cycling region JužnýSpiš	Spišská Nová Ves - Schulerloch	Poráč, Poracska Valley	Spiš Castle and surroundings
Product characteristics and specifications	Cycling region JužnýSpiš: - inclusion of charging stations for e-bikes - inclusion of bicycles and electric bicycles rental service - information campaign focused on safe cycling (for cyclists, for nature) - introduction of a new possible and mandatory bicycle guide service in selected localities	Revitalization of the Schulerloch area: - revitalization of the „Karasovádiara“ cave - wetland care and protection-biotope - development and marking of nordic walking tracks	Let's play miners!: - digging the mine: access to the lower corridors of the mine - demonstration of the mining waters management - mining museum - educational mining trail	Spiš bike tour into history: - exploring the culture of Spiš (historical monuments) - motivate the visitor to explore the nearby nature during the cultural a mining-related tours - application of modern technologies
Responsibility	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Slovenský raj & Spiš (LTO), transport companies	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Slovenský raj & Spiš (LTO)	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Slovenský raj & Spiš (LTO), Spiš Mining Museum	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Slovenský raj & Spiš (LTO), Spiš Museum SNM Levoča
Deadline	2021	2021	2022	2023

Košice and surroundings - product development



Area	Košice - Košice forest park	Ružín water reservoir	Hornád river	Abov region
Product characteristics and its specifications	<p>Discoveries by bike:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - calendar of micro-events and events - shuttle service with bicycle transport - transport by shared bicycles 	<p>Secrets of the Ružín:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - combined activity: hiking, rowing, cycling - observation of nature, lesser-known monuments 	<p>Hornád paddle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hornád rafting, eco-activities associated with the river - nature observation, environmental education aimed at protecting waters and river ecosystems - gastronomic experiences - support for the transport of boats, rental companies, water tourism activities 	<p>Abov on a bike:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slovenské Rudohorie, Šarišská pahorkatina and Košická kotlina by bike - Tours to famous and litter-known hidden places and gems. - atypical events
Responsibility	Košice regional DMO (RTO), KošiceTurizmus (LTO), Košice Transport Company	Košice regional DMO (RTO), KošiceTurizmus (LTO)	Košice regional DMO (RTO), KošiceTurizmus (LTO)	Košice regional DMO (RTO), KošiceTurizmus (LTO)
Deadline	2021	2021	2022	2023

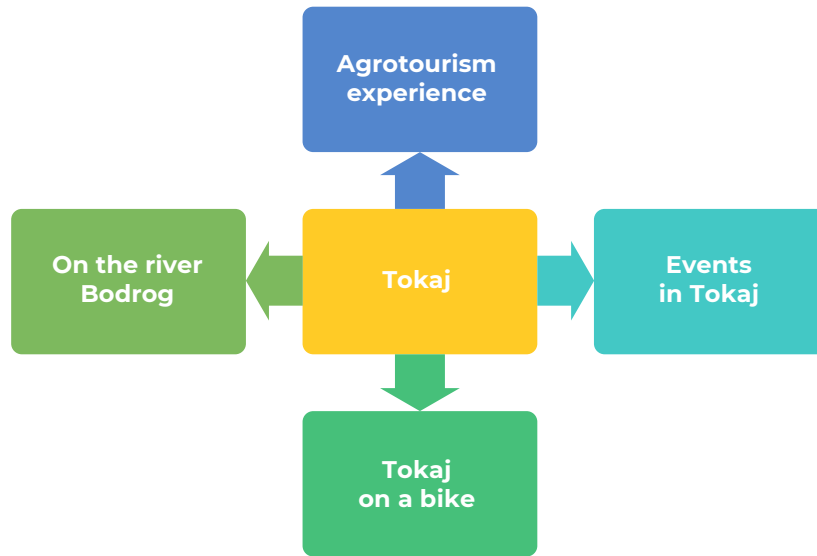
Dolný Zemplín - product development



Area	Vihorlat (Vihorlat Mountains)	Castles and cultural monuments in Zemplín	Vinné and surroundings (possible extension)	The rivers and lakes of Zemplín
Product characteristics and specifications	<p>Stars in Vihorlat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stargazing educational tour (educational boards about the starry sky) - creating a place for camping at night - establishing cooperation with the observatory in Kolonica and Michalovce - narrow-gauge railway in RemetskéHámre 	<p>Culture and education in Zemplín:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural tours (castles and manor houses in Zemplín) - beekeeping educational tour (workshops and presentations of beekeepers and honey production) 	<p>Zemplín wine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - workshops and events related to wine production and tasting - connection to the vineyard educational trail „Za viňanskimajatkami“ - expanding cooperation with local wine associations and producers (Sobrance, Michalovce and KráľovskýChlmec vine region) - involvement of local guides 	<p>For water:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - water tourism and connection to rivers (Laborec, Latorica, Uh, Bodrog) - shore excursions & cruise guided tours (history of ZeplínskaŠírava) - wells of Zemplín (find a well – questing) - bird and nature observation (Senné ponds)
Responsibility	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Zemplínska OCR (LTO), Michalovce observatory, Vihorlat observatory in Humenné	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Zemplínska OCR (LTO), administration of castles and manors	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Zemplínska OCR (LTO), Vinné wine association	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Zemplínska OCR (LTO), Slovak Water Management Enterprise, Slovak Fishing Association, the city of Michalovce, boat rental service

Deadline	2021	2021	2022	2022
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Tokaj – product development



Area	Tokaj wine region	Tokaj region	Border areas with Hungary	Medzibodrožie
Product characteristics and its specifications	Agrotourism experience: - support for existing tourism attractions (living in a wooden barrel, bathing in wooden tubs) - beekeeping products, herb growing, agritourism in the vineyard, fruit growing - gastro tourism (cooking school) - horse ride - product customization for families with children	Events in Tokaj: - support for small events that attract visitors throughout the year (Tour de Tokaj, events focused on gastronomy, fashion)	Tokaj on a bike: - connection of cycle routes of the region with the Hungarian part and the city of Košice - support and cooperation of bicycle rentals services (rationalise the possibility of renting bicycles to visitors, integration to the mobile application)	On the river Bodrog: - rafting on the river Bodrog - establishing cooperation with boating clubs and equipment rental services
Responsibility	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Association Tokaj Wine Road	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Association Tokaj Wine Road	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Association Tokaj Wine Road	Košice regional DMO (RTO), boating clubs and rental services

Deadline	2021	2021	2022	2023
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Priority actions and projects related to sub-objective 2: Completing the infrastructure suitable for the development of ecotourism

Considering the specified products in the Košice Region's destinations, we propose the need to complete the infrastructure and improve services.

Slovenský raj

Product	Healthy Palcmanská Maša	Exploring nature	Rafting in paradise	Lost in Kysel'
Infrastructure and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - specify and build places for loading / unloading visitors to electric boat - specify places for observing fauna and flora - build basic infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - train local guides - sites and resting places along the trails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - build new exit points in the locality Smižianská Maša - Cooperation with active stakeholders interested in rafting on the Hornád River (logistics, rental, relocation of vessels, maintenance, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - install tourist equipment so that they copy the natural character of the river - constant maintenance of the ferrata
Responsibility	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Slovenský raj & Spiš local DMO (LTO)	Administration of the Slovak Paradise NP, Slovenský raj & Spiš local DMO (LTO), Dedinky and Stratená municipalities	Administration of the Slovak Paradise NP, Slovenský raj & Spiš local DMO (LTO), Smižany	Administration of the Slovak Paradise NP
Deadline	2021	2021	2022	2022

Gemer

Product	Sacral and secular secret	Discover the mysterious places of the national park	Explore the Gemer Gothic	Slana Valley on the rail bike
Infrastructure and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - agreement with the church on the possibility of making historical parts accessible to visitors - ensure that services are offered by qualified staff - build a path and navigation board to the starting point of the Way of the Cross - modify the interior and exterior of the Watchtower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - build a tourist centre - the entrance gate to the Slovak Karst National Park - train local guides (fauna, flora, karst) - build stands, shelters for bicycles - specify the bus-shuttle stops - contract bus operator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure suitable opening possibilities (church openings) - train local guides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conditions and agreement with the Slovak Railway Company - specify stops - provide a shuttle service - specify the conditions for operation
Responsibility	municipality Rožňava, Košice regional DMO (RTO)	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Slovak Karst National Park Directorate	churches, Civic association Gotická cesta	ZSSR - Railways of the Slovak Republic, Košice regional DMO (RTO), private entrepreneur
Deadline	2021	2022	2022	2023

Spiš

Product	Cycling region JužnýSpiš	Revitalization of the Schulerloch area	Let us play miners!	Spiš bike tour into history
Infrastructure and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify places and install charging stations for electric bicycles - information boards with the charging station location - purchase and rent bicycles and electric bicycles - build resting places along the cycling routes - new service for bicycles transport (tourists buses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - landscaping - additional infrastructure (benches) - educational boards with a description and meaning of the area - nordic walking routes - running track with natural fitness-like stations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mining machine reconstruction - resting places (benches, board with a description of the mine) - eco and educational material/ applications with an explanation of how to further process and use the water used in the mine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maintenance and marking of cycle paths - infrastructural and personnel prerequisites for printing 3D souvenirs
Responsibility	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Slovenský raj & Spiš (LTO), transport companies	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Slovenský raj & Spiš (LTO),	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Slovenský raj & Spiš (LTO), Mining museum	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Slovenský raj & Spiš (LTO), Spiš Museum SNM Levoča
Deadline	2021	2021	2022	2023

Košice and surroundings

Product	Discoveries by bike	Secrets of the Ružín	Hornád paddle	Abov on a bike
Infrastructure and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bike stands, shelters and resting places - support bike-sharing in the Košice and its surroundings - support the transport and rental bike services - support single-trail parks, bike parks, bike points with services and stakeholders focused on bike tourism products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identification of places with the possibility of renting water equipment, - support events focusing on local customs, traditions, culture and gastronomy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - revitalization of Hornád river (Ždaňa, Čaňa, Gyňov, Trstené pri Hornáde) - identification of places for loading / unloading visitors (Small Hydro Družstevná pri Hornáde, Družstevná nad Hornádom, Small Hydro Ždaňa, Trstené pri Hornáde). - completion of small shipyards (Košice Anička, Ružín, MČ Jazero, Ružín, Ždaňa) - river watercourses adjustment (/2,5-3m passage for ships: Košice city, MČ Košice Krásna – Nižná Myšľa) - build bio corridors (Družstevná pri Hornáde, Košice Anička, Košice nad Jazerom, Ždaňa) - build eco-camps and camping sites (Ružín, Kysak – Košice Sever, Trstené pri Hornáde) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - complete the Abov part of the cycle network (as a bike path or as a combination of footpath and bike path) - build a bike path in the Košice city: (trieda KVP – Popradská – Trieda SNP – centrum – Furča) - build Eurovelo 11 as a separate bike path - cycling infrastructure (resting places, bike stands, charging stations, bike sharing)
Responsibility	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Košice Turizmus (LTO), Košice Transport Company	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Košice Turizmus (LTO),	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Košice Turizmus (LTO),	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Košice Turizmus (LTO),
Deadline	2021	2021	2022	2023

Dolný Zemplín

Product	Stars in Vihorlat	Culture and education in Zemplín	Zemplín wine	For water
Infrastructure and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify places for an interactive board about the starry sky and the narrow-gauge railway - specify a place to camp with the possibility of observing stars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - thematically linked castles and manor houses Zemplín - planting a new orchard (garden, flower field) - specify places for educational boards about bees - clean and maintain wells, their surroundings and install information boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to build a small visitor centre focused on viticulture (near Vinné castle) - rent a historical monument (traditional wine house with a cellar) - create a wine-theme educational trail specify places for information boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - specify water routes for visitors - build small harbours - create places for camping and relaxation - train local guides and gather information about the history of the Zemplínskašírava water reservoir (from floodplain forest through drainage, German airport, to recreation)
Responsibility	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Zemplínska OCR (LTO), Michalovce observatory, Vihorlat observatory in Humenné	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Zemplínska OCR (LTO), administration of castles and manors	KOCR, Zemplínska OCR, Viniarsky vinohradnícky a vinársky spolok	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Zemplínska OCR (LTO), Slovak Water Management Enterprise, Slovak Fishing Association, the city of Michalovce, boat rental service
Deadline	2021	2021	2022	2022

Tokaj

Product	Agro tourism experience	Events in Tokaj	Tokaj on a bike	On the river Bodrog
Infrastructure and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - revitalize orchards and build herb gardens - build cider houses - attractions for children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support event organizers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to settle property land rights - infrastructural connection of bike paths with Hungary - construction of a wooden cycle bridge over the river Bodrog from Viničky to Klin nad Bodrogom - additional infrastructure (charging stations for electric bicycles, bicycle service) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - specify and build a boarding point for boats, taking into account the principle of intermodality - additional infrastructure - landscaping
Responsibility	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Association Tokaj Wine Road	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Association Tokaj Wine Road	Košice regional DMO (RTO), Association Tokaj Wine Road	Košice regional DMO (RTO), boating clubs and rental services
Deadline	2021	2021	2022	2023

Priority actions and projects related to sub-objective 3: Perform marketing activities promoting ecotourism

Considering the specific objectives, we specify marketing activities for the Košice Region Tourism organization and local tourism organizations (or other stakeholders, if LTO is not established).

Plan of marketing activities of RTO Košice Region Tourism to ensure the development of ecotourism

Creation of electronic distribution of ecotourism experiences	Integrated marketing communication of ecotourism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - technical specification of the recommendation system (December 2020) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - integration of the social network into the RTO web portal (September 2020)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - price analysis in technology companies (January - February 2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - connection of mobile application with social media (October 2020)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - technical design of the system from the supplier (April 2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - link to cycle maps on the website and mobile application (March 2021)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - implementation and testing (June 2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - purchase of software for online reputation management - in case of a quantitative increase in electronic reviews (June 2021)

**Plan of marketing activities of the local destination organization (LTOs)
to ensure the development of ecotourism**

Consumer behaviour	Planning and booking phase	Staying in the destination	Return phase
Objective	Engagement on the purchase intentions	Visitor satisfaction	Recommendations
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adding ecotourism products to the destinations websites (or mobile applications) - electronic and printed materials about the ecotourism products - photos and videos of ecotourism experiences by visitors on the destination's social media - booking ecotourism experiences (contact, or electronic booking system) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - distribution of printed and electronic materials (guides) about the ecotourism experiences (information centres, website, mobile application) - event calendar update - adding ecotourism products to the visitor's card (if offered) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - distribution of newsletters with ecotourism products - feedback from visitors (questionnaire, review pages)
Deadline	Continuously with product, infrastructure and services development		

5.2. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

To systematically ensure the development of ecotourism in the Košice Region, it is necessary to ensure a monitoring and evaluation system. The monitoring system will remove one of the main obstacles in the application of the principles of sustainable tourism development - the difficulty of measuring and identifying its effects. It is, therefore, necessary to identify indicators that identify and quantify the impact of tourism on the destination and provide the basis for destination management. To monitor and evaluate ecotourism in the Košice Region, we propose a system of indicators subdivided into four categories:

1. destination management,
2. economic value,
3. social and cultural impact,
4. environmental impact.

The system is based on the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS, 2016). The European Commission initiated the ETIS in 2013 to monitor and evaluate the performance of destinations in terms of sustainable tourism development using a common comparable methodology. Based on the results of pilot testing and feedback in more than 100 destinations, the system of indicators was revised in 2016. The system contains 27 core indicators and 40 supplementary (optional) indicators. We propose to use mainly core indicators. The main advantage of ETIS system is **the international comparability** of destination performance with other destinations that focus on ecotourism, rel. sustainable tourism. For this reason, we do not propose our system, but we prefer to adapt the ETIS system to the specific conditions of the Košice Region.

We recommend systematically collecting, analysing and processing a system of core indicators as a basis for decision-making processes. The core indicators include important data inputs that need to be systematically monitored by the Košice Region. These data form the basis for ensuring the sustainable development of tourism. Ideally, these indicators should be monitored regularly. It is possible that in the early stages, the destination management organization will not be able to obtain all the data. However, this should not discourage a destination from tourism development monitoring, as it is a starting point for improving the destination progress towards ecotourism and sustainable tourism development.

The system also considers coordination for data collection (macro-level and / or cross-border). The proposed four categories of indicators can be monitored in the Košice Region in the following structure:

Section A: Destination management

Criteria	Indicator	Recommended value	Expected value	Data collection
Sustainable tourism public policy	Percentage of tourism enterprises/ establishments in the destination using a voluntary certification/ labelling for environmental /quality/ sustainability and/or Corporate Social Responsibility	n/a	30 %	Tourism service providers survey
Customer satisfaction	Percentage of tourists and same-day visitors that are satisfied with their overall (ecotourism) experience in the destination	99 %	95 %	Visitor survey
	Percentage of repeat/return visitors (within 5 years)	n/a	25 %	Visitor survey

Section B: Economic value

Criteria	Indicator	Recommended value	Expected value	Data collection
Tourism flow (volume and value) at destination	Number of tourist nights per month	n/a	Stable, without significant seasonal fluctuations	Official statistics
	Number of same-day visitors per month	n/a	Stable, without significant seasonal fluctuations	Mobile localization and visitor cards
	Relative contribution of tourism to the destination's economy (% GDP)	n/a	3-6%	Official statistics
	Daily spending per overnight tourist	64 EUR	64 EUR	Visitor survey, payment card data
	Daily spending per same-day visitors	43 EUR	43 EUR	Visitor survey, payment card data

Tourism enterprise(s) performance	Average length of stay of tourists (nights)	5,4	Domestic v. 3,5 Foreign v. 4	Official statistics, visitor survey
	Occupancy rate in commercial accommodation (per year)	64%	40%	Official statistics, tourism service providers survey
Quantity and quality of tourism employment	Direct tourism employment as percentage of total employment in the destination	3%	6% (local producers support)	Official statistic, tourism service providers survey
	Percentage of jobs in tourism that are seasonal	24%	25%	Official statistics, tourism service providers survey
Tourism supply chain	Percentage of locally produced food, drinks, goods and services sourced by the destination's tourism enterprises	n/a	35%	Official statistics, tourism service providers survey

Section C: Social and cultural impact

Criteria	Indicator	Recommended value	Expected value	Data collection
Community/ social impact	Number of tourists/visitors per 100 residents	446,3	100	Official statistics
	Percentage of residents who are satisfied with tourism in the destination	n/a	75 %	Residents survey
	Number of beds available in commercial accommodation establishments per 100 residents	5,7		Official statistics
	Number of second homes per 100 homes	n/a	18	Official statistics
Health and safety	Percentage of tourists who register a complaint with the police	n/a	0%	Police statistics
Gender equality	Percentage of men and women employed in the tourism sector	Women 49%	Women 55%	Official statistics, tourism service providers survey
	Percentage of tourism enterprises where the general manager position is held by a woman	22%	35%	Official statistics, tourism service providers survey

Inclusion/ accessibility	Percentage of rooms in commercial accommodation establishments accessible for people with disabilities	n/a	40%	Tourism service providers survey
	Percentage of commercial accommodation establishments participating in recognised accessibility information schemes	n/a	20%	Tourism service providers survey
	Percentage of public transport that is accessible to people with disabilities and specific access requirements	n/a	70%	Transport service providers survey
	Percentage of tourist attractions that are accessible to people with disabilities and/or participating in recognised accessibility information schemes	n/a	20%	Tourism service providers survey
Protecting and enhancing cultural heritage, local identity and assets	Percentage of residents that are satisfied with the impacts of tourism on the destination's identity	n/a	90%	Residents survey
	Percentage of the destination's events that are focused on traditional/local culture and heritage	n/a	80%	Regional events calendar

Skupina D: Environmentálny vplyv

Criteria	Indicator	Recommended value	Expected value	Data collection
Reducing transport impact	Percentage of tourists and same-day visitors using different modes of transport to arrive at the destination	n/a	60%	Visitor survey
	Percentage of tourists and same-day visitors using local/soft mobility/public transport services to get around the destination	15%	50%	Visitor survey
	Average travel (km) by tourists and same-day visitors from home to the destination	n/a	-	Visitor survey
	Average carbon footprint of tourists and same-day visitors travelling from home to the destination	n/a	Domestic=120kgCO ₂ Foreign=200 kgCO ₂ +	Carbon footprint calculator (Carmacal)
Climate change	Percentage of tourism enterprises involved in climate change mitigation schemes — such as: CO ₂ offset, low energy systems, etc.— and 'adaptation' responses and actions	n/a	10%	Tourism service providers survey
	Percentage of tourism accommodation and attraction infrastructure located in 'vulnerable zones'	n/a	15 %	Košice regional GIS system

Solid waste management	Waste production per tourist night compared to general population waste production per person (kg)	n/a	Resident=0,37 kg Visitor=0,5 kg	Tourism service providers survey, official statistics
	Percentage of tourism enterprises separating different types of waste	n/a	100%	Tourism service providers survey
	Percentage of total waste recycled per tourist compared to total waste recycled per resident per year	23%	R=60%	Tourism service providers survey, official statistics
Sewage treatment	Percentage of sewage from the destination treated to at least secondary level prior to discharge	n/a	100%	Official statistics
Water management	Water consumption per tourist night compared to general population water consumption per resident night	n/a	100 l/ tourist night	Tourism service providers and residents survey
	Percentage of tourism enterprises taking actions to reduce water consumption	n/a	60%	Tourism service providers survey
	Percentage of tourism enterprises using recycled water	n/a	20%	Tourism service providers survey
Energy usage	Energy consumption per tourist night compared to general population energy consumption per resident night	n/a	Resident: 45 MJ Visitor: 150 MJ	Tourism service providers and residents survey, official statistics
	Percentage of tourism enterprises that take actions to reduce energy consumption	n/a	60%	Tourism service providers survey
	Percentage of annual amount of energy consumed from renewable sources (Mwah) compared to overall energy consumption at destination level per year	n/a	15%	Official statistics
Landscape and biodiversity protection	Percentage of local enterprises in the tourism sector actively supporting protection, conservation and management of local biodiversity and landscapes	9%	25%	Tourism service providers survey

By monitoring these indicators, but especially by achieving specific values, tourism stakeholders can contribute to the development of tourism sustainably and make **the Košice Region attractive ecotourism destination**. To ensure this, it is necessary to raise awareness and coordinate the activities of stakeholders to reduce the negative ecological effects. At the same time, the measures may influence consumer behaviour like reducing water consumption, energy and stimulate green mobility.
















5.3. RESULT/ TOURISM IMPACT MONITORING

Regarding the difficulty of data collection, we recommend focusing on the following core indicators. To achieve the expected indicators' value we present current values identified using primary research and secondary sources.

Sub-Objective 1:

Promoting the development of ecotourism products in the Košice Region

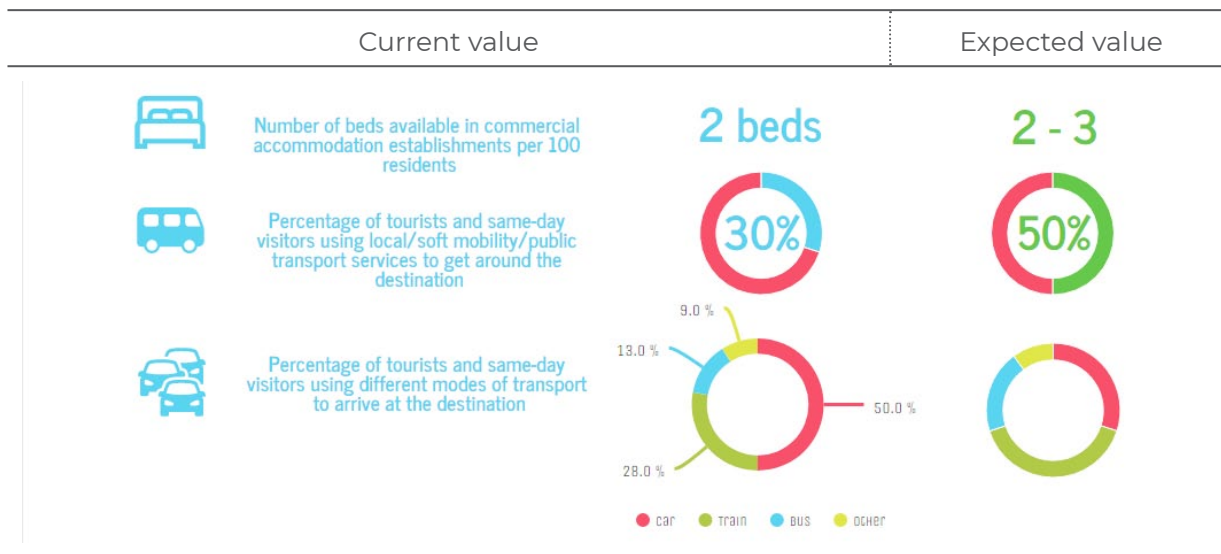
- Percentage of tourists and same-day visitors that are satisfied with their overall (ecotourism) experience in the destination
- Number of tourist nights per month
- Daily spending per overnight tourist
- Daily spending per same-day visitors
- Number of tourists/visitors per 100 residents
- Percentage of residents who are satisfied with tourism development in the destination
- Percentage of the destination's events that are focused on traditional/local culture and heritage

	Current value	Expected value
 <p>Percentage of tourists and same-day visitors that are satisfied with their overall (ecotourism) experience in the destination</p>	 <p>56%</p>	 <p>95%</p>
 <p>Tourist nights</p>		
 <p>Daily spending per overnight tourist</p>	€62	€64
 <p>Daily spending per same-day visitors</p>	€30	€43
 <p>Number of tourists/visitors per 100 residents</p>	40	100 spatial dispersion
 <p>Percentage of residents who are satisfied with tourism development in the destination</p>	 <p>68%</p>	 <p>75%</p>
 <p>Percentage of the destination's events that are focused on traditional/local culture and heritage</p>	 <p>75%</p>	 <p>80%</p>

Sub-Objective 2:

Completing the infrastructure suitable for the development of ecotourism

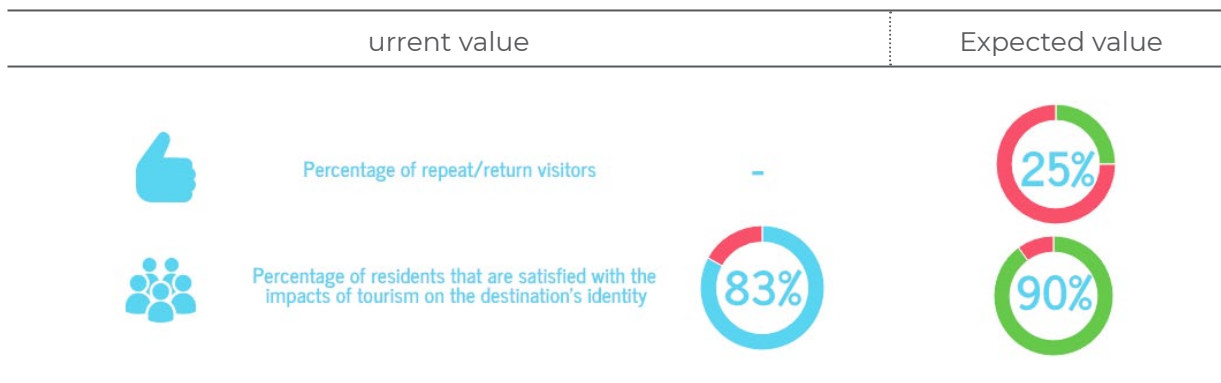
- Number of beds available in commercial accommodation establishments per 100 residents
- Percentage of tourists and same-day visitors using different modes of transport to arrive at the destination
- Percentage of tourists and same-day visitors using local/soft mobility/public transport services to get around the destination



Sub-Objective 2:

Completing the infrastructure suitable for the development of ecotourism

- Percentage of repeat/return visitors
- Percentage of residents that are satisfied with the impacts of tourism on the destination's identity



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