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COMMON STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
in the cross-border area Elin Pelin and Leskovac
2021-2026

- Challenges Today - Opportunities Tomorrow-

Place: Elin Pelin & Leskovac

Data: April 2021

DISCLAIMER

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ОБЩИНА ЕЛИН ПЕЛИН



TURISTICKA ORGANIZACIJA LESKOVAC



**Centar za razvoj Jablaničkog
i Pčinjskog okruga**



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Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Methodology	6
3. Sustainable tourism	12
4. Situational analysis	22
4.1 Elin Pelin	22
4.2 Leskovac	35
4.3. SWOT Analysis.....	62
4.4. Competitiveness Analysis.....	63
5. Common Strategy	70
5.1. Vision	70
5.2. Strategic objectives	71
5.2.1 Tourist products.....	73
5.2.2 Marketing.....	83
5.3 Action plan	86
6. Monitoring and evaluation	88
6.1 Indicators of sustainable tourism development	88
6.2 Institutional and organizational infrastructure.....	90
7. Literature	93

Acronyms and Abbreviations

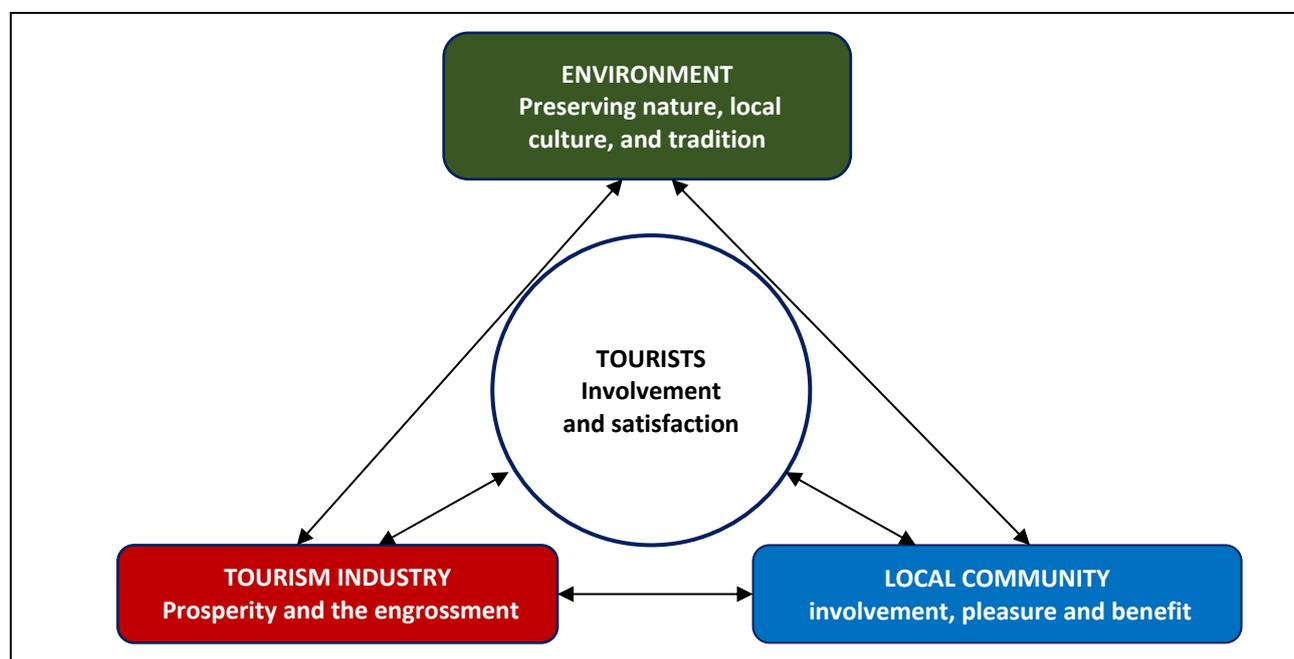
SBRA	The Serbian Business Registers Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
EU	The European Union
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
LGU	Local Government Unit
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSI	National Statistical Institute
CSO	Civil Society Organization
RDA	Regional Development Agency
SORS	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia
RA	Regional Agencies
RS	Republic of Serbia
TO	The Tourism Organization
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DG	Directorate General of EU Commission
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing, Exhibitions
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PKS	The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	The World Tourism Organization
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

1. Introduction

Travel and tourism are one of the world's largest sectors that drive socio-economic development and job creation. In addition to creating jobs, tourism helps develop links between societies. Tourism generates 9.5% of GDP and accounts for 11.20% of total employment in the European Union. Through direct, indirect, and induced effects in the economy, tourism creates jobs for 26 million people in the EU, especially for young people, women, and people with a migrant background. Europe retains leadership in the world tourism market. International tourism accounts for 6% of total EU exports and 22% of services exports. The competitiveness of the tourism sector is intricately linked to its sustainability, as the quality of tourist destinations is strongly influenced by their natural and cultural environment and their integration into the local community. The sustainability of tourism covers a number of aspects: the responsible use of natural resources, considering the impact of activities on the environment (waste production, water pressure, land, and biodiversity, etc.). Therefore, tourism, as a social and economic phenomenon, i.e., economic activity, is most directly exposed to constant and strong changes. These changes are the result of the adaptation of the tourism industry to the world economic, technological, communication, information, climate, socio-psychological and other changes. The rules of the game and key success factors in the tourism industry are changing, as shown by the emergence of new destinations on the global tourism map. Changes in life expectancy, working hours, lifestyles, the way of choosing and buying tourist trips, and especially the prices of transport services, are revolutionizing the paradigm of one-time travel due to vacations until yesterday. Diversification and constant product innovation, experiences and emotions, the search for new experiences, travel for culture and education have become new standards and market facts without which it is no longer possible to play in the global tourism industry. Recognizing the fact that every euro spent on tourism generates an additional 3 euros through the economy, proper and sustainable management is the basis for recognizing and multiplying the positive effects of tourism on the economy. That is why tourism is important for the cross-border area Bulgaria - Serbia, as well as for the municipality of Elin Pelin and the city of Leskovac. Interreg - IPA Cross-border Cooperation Program Bulgaria-Serbia through the priority axis sustainable tourism, finances projects that contribute to the development of sustainable tourism and the creation of cross-border tourism products. Tourism represents a development opportunity for the municipality of Elin Pelin and the city of Leskovac. The Leskovac Barbecue Week gastronomic festival has been confirmed as one of the main culinary events in Southeast Europe. In addition to this festival, in the last few years, the festival "Days of Leskovac Mućkalica" has also gained importance. The traditional folklore festival Shoppe Elin Pelin in the municipality of Elin Pelin is one of the very popular national festivals organized in Bulgaria. Every year, a large number of visitors enjoy the magic of this festival, whose main goal is to celebrate tradition and cultural diversity. Festivals and events have a great impact on the image of the border area as a tourist destination and provide opportunities for the development of cross-border partnerships based on synergies and mutual benefits. Recognizing these opportunities, the municipalities of Elin Pelin, Bulgaria, the Tourist Organization of Leskovac, Serbia and the Centre for Development of Jablanica and Pcinja Districts of Serbia (hereinafter: project partners) jointly implement the Magic of Synergy project (№ CB007.2.12.002) within the Interreg - IPA program cross-border cooperation Bulgaria - Serbia. This joint initiative has the following objectives: i) To create a synergetic effect of joint action of tourism actors in the field of connecting festivals, development of joint policies for tourism development and new tourism products in the border area of Elin Pelin and Leskovac; ii) Implement marketing activities aimed at tourism operators and tourism service providers in relation to the promotion of a common tourism product; iii) Increase the capacity of tourism actors in the cross-border area of Elin Pelin and Leskovac to implement a model of sustainable tourism development through the exchange of best practices, experiences and knowledge. The project focuses on how communities can jointly develop common tourism development policies and new tourism products / services. The valorisation of synergy between the festivals is realized through the joint work of key tourism actors from Elin Pelin and Leskovac and project partners on the development of joint tourism development policies and the development of new joint cross-border tourism products / services. The purpose of these policies is to identify and develop model(s) of sustainable tourism development in the cross-border area of Elin Pelin and Leskovac. Common tourism development policies should contribute to increasing the capacity of local communities for strategic planning, management, and efficient use of potential in the field of intangible heritage and tourism.

The analytical basis for the development of these policies is the realized research "Tourism Value Chain Diagnosis". The aim of this research was to assess and analyse the current situation in the tourism sector in the cross - border area of Elin Pelin Bulgaria and Leskovac Serbia. In this particular case, the value chain approach was used as a means of identifying stakeholders, power relations and economic benefits related to tourism offerings in Elin Pelin and Leskovac. The diagnosis of value chains in tourism showed credible Paths to Prosperity and perspectives of sustainable development of tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac. As planning is a key tool for ensuring the development, marketing and management of sustainable tourism, the project partners have launched a strategic planning process leading to the development of Common strategy for sustainable tourism in the cross-border area Elin Pelin and Leskovac 2021-2026 (hereinafter: Common Strategy). The objective of this Common Strategy is to identify and develop a model of sustainable tourism development in the cross-border area of Elin Pelin and Leskovac. It is a model that contributes to increasing competitiveness and stronger market positioning of the destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac. The Common Strategy is the result of several months of work and commitment of the representatives of tourist actors from Elin Pelin and Leskovac. Through the efforts of all actors in the process of elaboration the Common Strategy, priorities, development goals have been set and a concrete action plan has been defined. The action plan is a living organism that contains all the basic elements necessary for the development of socially desirable and sustainable tourism, but it is not rigid and unchangeable, but adaptable to real time and enables adjustment to the satisfaction of all stakeholders. Participation of interested tourism actors and sustainable development are the main principles applied in the strategic planning process. The process of strategic planning includes tourism actors who are direct and indirect participants in the tourism value chain. In that sense, a Joint Tourism Working Group was formed, which consists of representatives of 10 tourist actors from Elin Pelin and 10 tourist actors from Leskovac. The immediate goals of the Joint Tourism Working Group are i) creating a synergetic effect of joint influence of tourism actors in the field of connecting festivals, developing common policies for tourism development and new tourism products in the cross-border area Elin Pelin and Leskovac and ii) increasing capacity of tourism actors in cross-border area Elin Pelin and Leskovac for the application of the model of sustainable tourism development through the exchange of best practices, experiences and knowledge. Operationally observed, the Joint Tourism Working Group with the active facilitation of members of the project team of the project partner 3 (Centre for Development of Jablanica and Pčinja districts Leskovac) elaborated the Common Strategy. The Joint Tourism Working Group has adopted a development model (illustration below), which represents a balance between demand in the tourism market and the strengthening of the local community and provides a framework and guidelines for stakeholder action to achieve development goals.

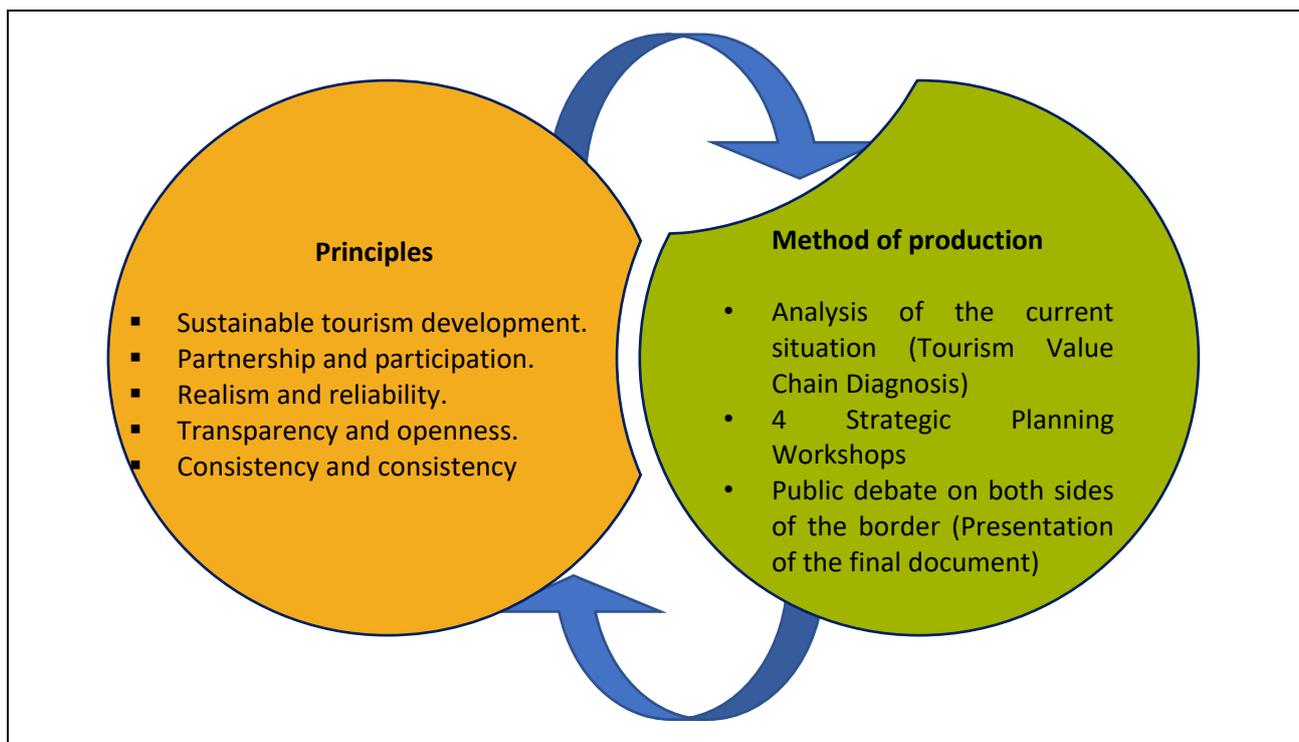
Illustration 1 Model of sustainable tourism development in the cross-border area Elin Pelin and Leskovac



2. Methodology

Finding the right balance between the autonomous development of destinations and their protection on the one hand and the development of competitive economic activity on the other is a challenging endeavour. Sustainable development of the destination implies protection, improvement, sustainable use of existing natural and created resources and valorisation of existing tourist potentials. The methodology of drafting the Common Strategy is based on the application of this concept and finding the optimal form of tourism development that will not degrade resources in order for future generations to meet their tourism needs. Considering the stated concept, the principles, and procedures of drafting the Common Strategy have been applied, which, with the efficient participation of stakeholders, provide solutions for sustainable tourism development.

Illustration 2 Principles and manner of drafting the Common Strategy



Principle of sustainable tourism development: Sustainable tourism is based on an integral and complex approach that places equal emphasis on preserving the environment, affirming social integrity, nurturing the cultural characteristics of the local population, optimal satisfaction of tourist needs and economic profit. These principles of sustainability were applied during the development of the Common Strategy. Their application guarantees the optimal use of environmental resources that are elements of tourism development, through the support of important ecological processes and the protection of natural heritage and biodiversity. The proposed interventions respect the socio-cultural originality of local communities on both sides of the border, protect their cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to cultural understanding and tolerance. The Common Strategy provides solutions that ensure long-term economic growth, providing economic benefits for all relevant participants in the strategic planning process.

Principle of partnership and participation: It involves the involvement of representatives of the public, private and civil sectors in each phase of strategic planning. During the development of this joint development document, key tourism actors from Elin Pelin and Leskovac are involved. The partnership principle has been implemented through the establishment of a Joint Tourism Working Group. This group consists of representatives of 10 tourist actors from Elin Pelin and 10 tourist actors from Leskovac. The actors are business entities, tourism organizations, entities that manage natural and cultural heritage, local authorities, and other specific entities that influence the development of a tourist destination.

The partnership is based on the voluntary participation of these tourism actors. Sustainable tourism requires informing all participants in tourism and making decisions by consensus. Stakeholder participation was reflected through discussion and consensus building on important development issues.

Principle of realism and reliability: The Common Strategy aims to propose a model of sustainable tourism development and intervention based on relevant available data and information. The Common Strategy is based on an analysis of the internal and external environment, including the latest global trends in tourism development. The approach is based on the facts and characteristics of the tourist destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac, which implies respect for economic, social, cultural, spatial, environmental, regional, administrative, and other possibilities and limitations when planning. The data on the basis of which this strategic document is being developed are the result of research conducted within the framework of "Tourism Value Chain Diagnosis cross border area Elin Pelin Bulgaria and Leskovac Serbia ". For the purposes of drafting this strategic document, additional participatory analysis and stakeholder consultations were conducted. Also, for the purpose of drafting this document, studies of importance for the development of tourism were used, which were the subject of projects of the European Union, the World Travel and Tourism Council and the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

Principle of transparency and openness: Involvement of the public is a principle without the application of which it is not possible to expect a high level of strategic document. Namely, the creation of the image of a tourist destination is not possible without the readiness to involve the public in various actions to raise the quality of tourist services in the entire territory of the destination. Tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac cannot and must not count on tourism in isolated oases for guests, but, on the contrary, they should provide a system of interesting tourist experiences on their entire territory. The Common Strategy was prepared within a transparent and consultative process with all stakeholders. The results of the research "Tourism Value Chain Diagnosis cross border area Elin Pelin Bulgaria and Leskovac Serbia" and information on the work of the Joint Tourism Working Group are publicly published on the websites of the project partners. The draft Common Strategy has also been published and made available to the public on the project partners' websites. All published publications are in Bulgarian, Serbian and English. At the end of the process of drafting the Common Strategy, public debates were organized on the draft strategic document in Elin Pelin and Leskovac. The general public was given the opportunity to send opinions, proposals, and suggestions for improving the draft Common Strategy.

Principle of consistency and coherence: The Common Strategy is integrated into a broader strategic and planning framework for tourism development. During the development of the Common Strategy, the following umbrella documents were consulted: Agenda 2030, Europe 2020, Europe - World Tourism Destination No. 1. IPA Cross-border Cooperation Program Bulgaria-Serbia, Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in Bulgaria 2014-2030, and Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2016- 2025 More details about these documents in the part strategic framework of tourism development.

Strategic framework: The Common Strategy contributes to the achievement of tourism development policy objectives at the global, European, and national levels. The global framework for tourism development is set out in Agenda 2030. It is a global development agenda that promotes sustainable development goals through resource mobilization to eradicate poverty, inequality and provide an adequate response to climate change. The principle of sustainable tourism is permeated through all activities of the Common Strategy and it directly contributes to the achievement of goal 8.9 of the 2030 Agenda to design and implement policies in 2030 to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products. It also contributes to the achievement of sub-objective 12.b Develop and implement tools to monitor the impact of sustainable development on sustainable tourism. The Common Strategy contributes to the goals of the European Strategy 2020 (P1 Sustainable Growth) through the creation and implementation of public policies that promote sustainable tourism, build human capacity in tourism, conduct tourism valorisation of intangible cultural heritage (festivals) and promote local culture. The Common Strategy is harmonized with the strategy of European Territorial Cooperation, because it enables better use of the development potentials of the intangible cultural heritage.

The Common Strategy is in line with the "Europe - World Tourism Destination No. 1" policy framework for tourism in Europe (COM / 2010/0352 final)¹. This tourism strategy of the European Union has identified four priority areas for action: i) stimulating the competitiveness of the European tourism sector; ii) development of sustainable, responsible, and high-quality tourism; iii) consolidating the image and profile of Europe as a set of sustainable and high-quality destinations; iv) maximizing the potential of EU financial policies and instruments for tourism development. The guidelines of this document are in line with the umbrella strategic document Europe 2020 and are designed to increase the competitiveness of the tourism sector and improve the capacity for sustainable development. A significant part of the planned activities in the Common Strategy is dedicated to the diversification and improvement of the quality of tourism products, as well as to raising the capacity of actors in the field of tourism. As innovation is a key factor in competitiveness, a strong emphasis is placed on the use of new ICT solutions in tourism. The Common Strategy emphasizes the importance of promoting the intangible cultural heritage, offering a new platform for cooperation between tourism actors and strengthening the link between communities in border areas. The Common Strategy contributes to the goals of the IPA Cross-border Cooperation Program Bulgaria-Serbia (2014-2020) by creating a basis for the development of sustainable tourism and builds a model of cross-border cooperation between tourism actors from Elin Pelin and Leskovac. The Common Strategy integrates the ideas and actions of tourism actors on both sides of the border. It basically contains actions that stakeholders from Elin Pelin and Leskovac are jointly implementing in the territory covered by the strategic document. The area of the Common Strategy includes the administrative territory of the municipality of Elin Pelin and the city of Leskovac. This cross-border area covers an area of 1458.01 km² or 3.32% of the territory of the IPA Cross-border Cooperation Program Bulgaria - Serbia. The Common Strategy proposes solutions to the identified common problems of the tourist destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac. The priorities and objectives of the Common Strategy are specifically aimed at achieving coherence and complementarity with the national strategic framework. In that sense, it is harmonized with the Strategy of Sustainable Tourism Development in Bulgaria 2014-2030 and the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2016-2025). Undertaking joint actions by tourism actors contributes to strengthening the existing potential in the fields of tourism, cultural and natural heritage through the implementation of joint initiatives on branding and promotion of existing and new tourism products and diversification of the tourist offer.

Methodological approach: Strategic planning is a systematic process of identifying rational needs, building links, and agreeing on priorities among key stakeholders, combining long-term perspective (vision and goals) and short-term measures (projects that can be implemented within a predefined period, up to 5 year). The Common Strategy goes in the direction of modernization and development of the tourist offer of the destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac through a system of responsible planning and through the application of solutions built on their own advantages, potentials, and challenges of global competition. The chosen methodological approach (illustration below) provides answers to the main common development challenges.

Illustration 3 Methodological approach



¹ Source: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52010DC0352>.

The approach was based on a good understanding of the starting points and the challenges to be overcome. The essence of this participatory approach is that step by step, from a broad picture of the current situation, with the collection of necessary information and detailed analysis of data, to specific projects, the implementation of which will lead to visible and measurable improvements in tourism. Using the method of participatory analysis, the attractiveness-competitiveness of destinations as well as the market positioning of potential products were discussed at the workshops. Evaluation instruments in the form of matrices were used for this purpose. In this way, the competitiveness analysis in the field of tourism was performed in a participatory way. In addition, by merging the findings for the destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac, points of synergy were created, which are the basis of the planned joint interventions. This method studied the possibility of combining different types of tourism in order to achieve better results in the tourism business or some types of tourism were analysed from the aspect of different target groups. The method of document content analysis was used to analyse the collected data. An analysis of available literature, research papers, strategic documents related to the tourist destinations in question was performed. Statistical data, scientific papers from several fields, archival documentation and internet presentations of national and regional entities, local self-governments and other relevant institutions were used as relevant data sources. The development of the Common Strategy is based on the participation of all important tourist actors and the principles of joint development of the tourist potentials of the destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac. The process of drafting and adopting the Common Strategy consists of several phases and activities that are interconnected. An overview of the process of drafting the Common Strategy is shown in the table below.

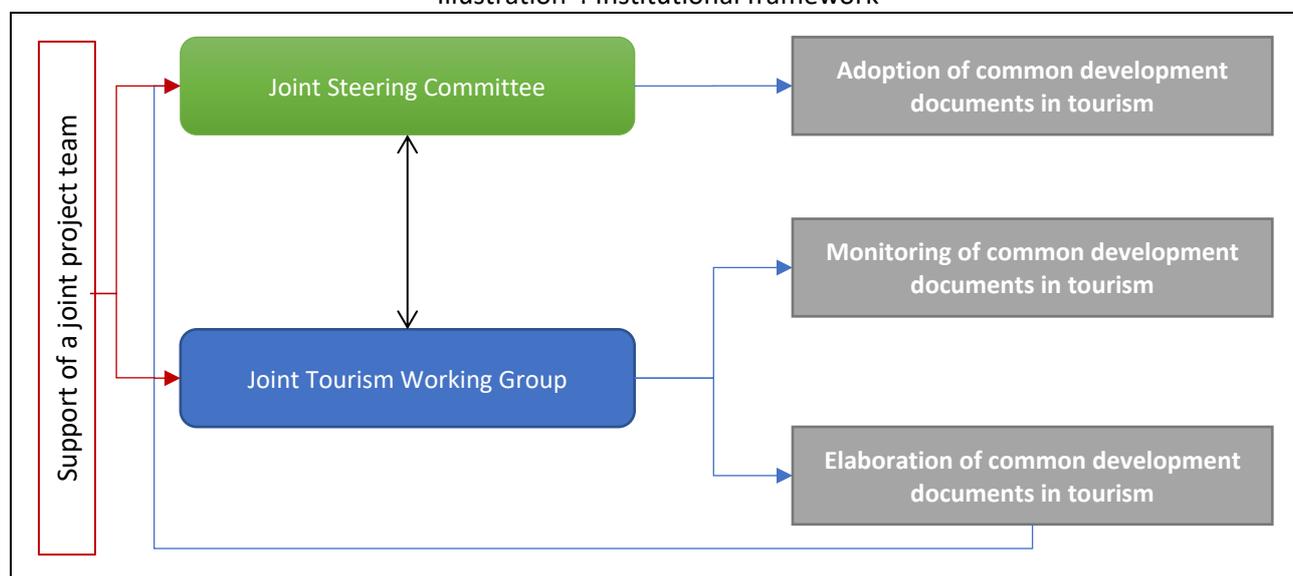
Table 1 The process of drafting the Common Strategy

No	Activity name	Activity description	Time of realization
1	Analysis of the current situation - Tourism Value Chain Diagnosis	Collection and analysis of data related to the assessment of the situation in the tourism sector in the cross-border area of Elin Pelin and Leskovac. The analysis contains all the most important quantitative and qualitative data and descriptions of the tourism sector of Elin Pelin and Leskovac.	September 2020-February 2021
2	Creating an institutional framework for drafting a Common Strategy	Creating Joint Steering Committee for the project (Joint Steering Committee).	September 2020
3		Identification of key stakeholders and establishment of a Joint Tourism Working Group.	February 2021
4	Strategic part	First Session of the Joint Tourism Working Group and Strategic Planning Workshop 1. Partnership for common tourism development and situation/bottleneck analysis. Place: Elin Pelin Bulgaria	February 2021
5		Second session of the Joint Tourism Working Group and Strategic Planning Workshop 2. Setting policy goals, strategic objectives, and priorities. Place: Elin Pelin Bulgaria.	February 2021
6	Operative part	Third session of the Joint Tourism Working Group and Strategic Planning Workshop 3. Design an action plan and budget for the implementation of the development document. Place: Leskovac Serbia	March 2021
7		Fourth session of the Joint Tourism Working Group and Strategic Planning Workshop 4. A coordination mechanism and system of monitoring and evaluation. Place: Leskovac Serbia	March 2021
8	Public discussion	Preparation of the first working version of the document - Draft Common Strategy	April 2021
9		Preparation of the programme for the public discussion	April 2021
10		Public discussion/debate in Elin Pelin	April 2021
11		Public discussion/debate in Leskovac	April 2021
12	Adoption of a common strategy	Adoption of the final version of the Common Strategy at the project steering committee meeting.	April 2021

Analysis of the current situation - Tourism Value Chain Diagnosis: The Common Strategy is based on a specific analysis and identified needs of the cross-border area of Elin Pelin and Leskovac. In order to achieve reliable results and operational solutions, research was conducted, and consulting procedures were performed. The analytical basis is the realized research "Tourism Value Chain Diagnosis cross border area Elin Pelin Bulgaria and Leskovac Serbia ". The area of the realized research is the territory of the municipality of Elin Pelin (hereinafter: Destination Elin Pelin) and the territory of the city of Leskovac (hereinafter: Destination Leskovac). The aim of this research was to assess and analyse the current situation in the tourism sector in the cross - border area of Elin Pelin Bulgaria and Leskovac Serbia. In this particular case, the value chain approach was used as a means of identifying stakeholders, power relations and economic benefits related to tourism offerings in Elin Pelin and Leskovac. Value chain analysis was applied to identify and assess synergies and potentials for cooperation between tourism actors, status of local tourist attractions, characteristics of local tourism products / offers, market chain actors and links, role of stakeholders in product development and opportunities for diversification of tourism products. The diagnosis of value chains in tourism showed credible **Paths to Prosperity** and perspectives of sustainable development of tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac. Through this research, the profiles of tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac were defined, the competitiveness of tourist products was analysed, and important qualitative information was collected. To collect this information, a field research was conducted based on surveys and interviews of tourist actors Elin Pelin and Leskovac. In summary, 76 organizations that directly and indirectly participate in the tourist value chain were surveyed. Additionally, 13 tourists were interviewed, and 7 tourist actors were interviewed face to face. The interview process took place in the conditions of the COVID-19 epidemic. Due to that, some of the business entities cancelled their participation in the interview. The applied instrument "survey questionnaire" contained questions that are related to the development possibilities of the mentioned tourist destinations. In this way, in the phase of preparation of the research on the diagnosis of value chains in tourism, important information was collected for the development of this strategic document. The diagnosis of value chains in tourism as a general assessment of the situation has been prepared for the purpose of defining the vision, key priorities, and goals, which will be specified in the five-year Action Plan for Tourism Development.

Institutional framework: The Joint Project Steering Committee and the Joint Tourism Working Group form the institutional framework for the development and adoption of the Common Strategy. Their roles are shown in the illustration below. The main function of the Joint Steering Committee is to monitor the implementation of the project, financial operations, and sustainability of the project. Also, this committee is responsible for the adoption of the created development policies of sustainable tourism. The members of the Joint Steering Committee are representatives of the project partners and the city of Leskovac. The Joint Project Steering Committee consists of 6 members, 3 from Bulgaria and 3 from Serbia.

Illustration 4 Institutional framework



The process of strategic planning includes tourism actors who are direct and indirect participants in the tourism value chain. In that sense, a Joint Tourism Working Group was formed, which consists of representatives of 10 tourist actors from Elin Pelin and 10 tourist actors from Leskovac. Formally, this was achieved through the signing of a Protocol on Cooperation between the project and tourism actors from Elin Pelin and Leskovac. The subject of this protocol is the establishment of productive cooperation between the Project and organizations / institutions. and regarding the joint development of tourism in the cross-border area of Elin Pelin and Leskovac. A total of 20 protocols were signed, of which 10 organizations from Elin Pelin and 10 organizations from Leskovac. The signatories of the protocol are direct and indirect participants in the tourist value chain. The immediate goals of the Joint Tourism Working Group are i) creating a synergetic effect of joint influence of tourism actors in the field of connecting festivals, developing common policies for tourism development and new tourism products in the cross-border area Elin Pelin and Leskovac and ii) increasing capacity of tourism actors in cross-border area Elin Pelin and Leskovac for the application of the model of sustainable tourism development through the exchange of best practices, experiences and knowledge. Operationally observed, the Joint Tourism Working Group with the active facilitation of members of the project team of the project partner 3 (Centre for Development of Jablanica and Pčinja districts Leskovac) elaborated the Common Strategy.

Organizing the process of elaboration, a strategic document: Defining future directions of tourism development and improving its competitive position is based on consultations with stakeholders. Workshops are an assessment tool based on the interaction of workshop participants and moderators on specific topics. The design of the flow of thought is adapted to different challenges specific to the common area of interest and tourism development. Development workshops enable the identification of thematic potential and the discovery of possible development scenarios. The presence of tourism actors on both sides of the border at each workshop guarantees the required level of objectivity and credibility of information. The workshops were thematic, tailored to different challenges specific to the common area of interest and the development of sustainable tourism. Using a participatory, open method, participants gradually focused on thinking about the specifics of tourist destinations, internal and external challenges, the target group of tourists, variants of tourist focus, and a clear distinction of which projects / initiatives should be launched to achieve sustainable tourism development. Each strategic planning workshop is structured in 3 sessions lasting 1 day. The total number of workshop participants, ie direct beneficiaries of the project was 20. According to the type of institutions / organizations, half come from the economy and they represent direct participants in the value chain. Specifically, these are travel organizers (15.00%) and accommodation service providers (25.00%) and producers of local products (5.00%). From the institutions and support organizations, the workshop was attended by representatives of local self-government, museum, cultural centre, tourist organization, business support organization, educational institution, and non-governmental organizations. In the period February - March 2021, 4 workshops were successfully realized in Elin Pelin and Leskovac. The process of drafting the Common Strategy enabled full cooperation of stakeholders through regular meetings, workshops, presentations, exchange of e-mails and other ways of communication with all members of the Joint Working Group for Tourism, which is the main actor in the strategic planning process.

Public debate: Participatory planning also implies public involvement in the strategic planning process. Public **debates** are part of the participatory planning process and they provide the final consent of the community before the adoption of the strategic document by the project steering committee. Two public **debates** were organized, one in Elin Pelin and the other in Leskovac. Public **debates** were organized with the aim of **improvement** the draft Common Strategy. The expectations from the public debate are to encourage experts and the general public to get involved in the strategic planning process and to give concrete proposals, opinions, and comments on the proposal of the Common Strategy.

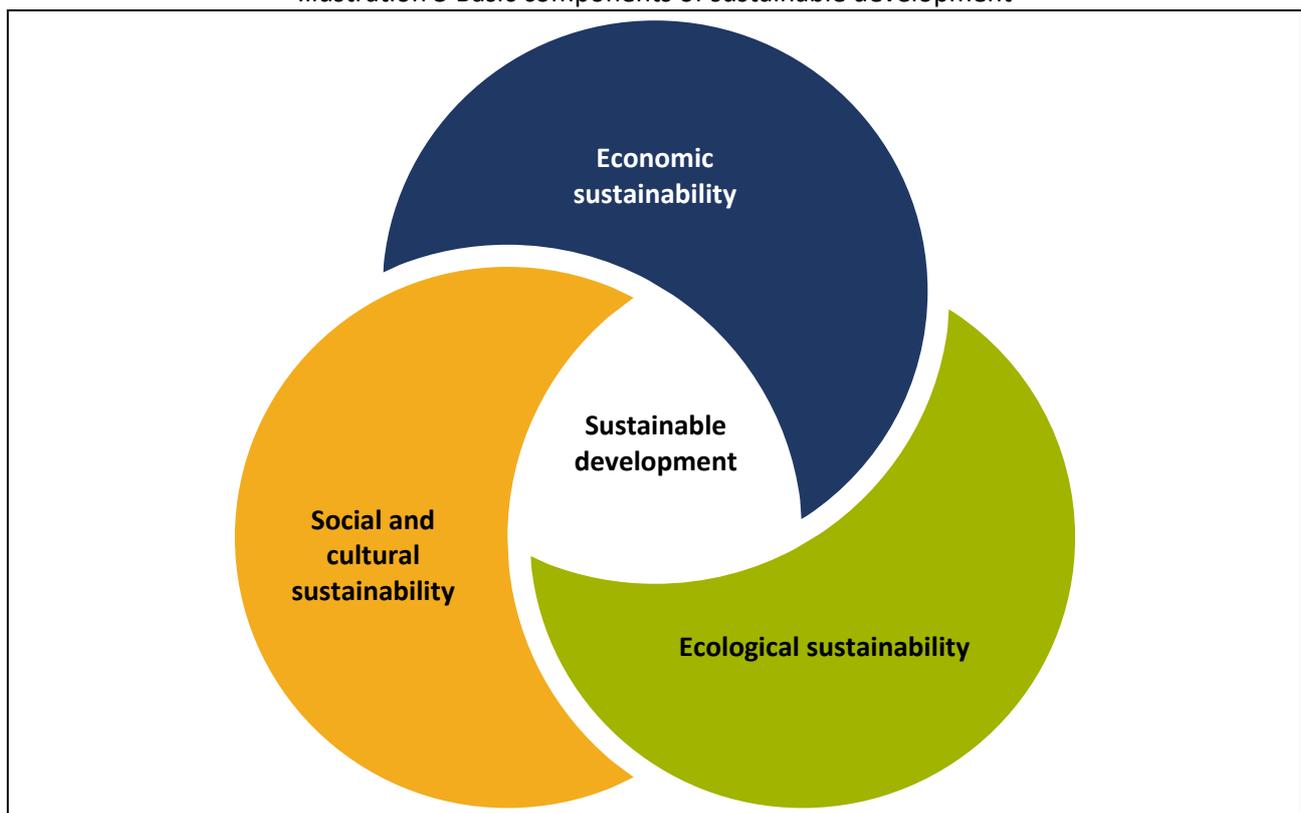
Adoption of the Common Strategy: The Common Strategy was adopted at the regular session of the Joint Steering Committee of the project.

3. Sustainable tourism

Sustainable development means meeting the ever-growing needs of an ever-growing human population, improving life and lifestyles over a long period of time. It is a concept that implies balanced economic, social, and cultural development, without endangering the environment, which will enable future generations to develop through the use of resources at the same or even higher level. The concept of sustainable development is based on three key components:

- i. environmental sustainability, which ensures that development is compatible with vital ecological processes, biodiversity, and biological resources
- ii. social and cultural diversity, which ensures that development is compatible with the cultural and traditional values of human communities and contributes to strengthening their integrity
- iii. economic sustainability, which ensures that development is economically efficient with an open opportunity for future generations to use resources.

Illustration 5 Basic components of sustainable development



The challenge of sustainable development is to find opportunities to increase income while preserving nature and the environment. This means that radical changes are needed in societies and economies, ways of production and consumption. This requires changes in all sectors - in the energy, agriculture and fisheries, transport, construction and tourism sectors, etc. great impact on the environment and ecosystems, but also the economy, society, and culture. If tourism and its development are effectively managed, it can certainly contribute to regional and cross-border development. If tourism is not managed in the right way, then its development can have negative effects on both nature and society. If we compare tourism with other branches of the economy, we will see that it depends more on the national, regional, and local resources of a country, that it is very tightly tied to the territory and that it depends very much on natural resources and services. Tourism development affects the environment, natural and cultural resources. If these impacts are not adequately controlled, there is a spontaneous development of tourism that can jeopardize their own survival by degrading the environment. It can be said that this rule is for all economic branches, but it must be pointed out that it is more important for tourism than for industry or some other sectors.

Therefore, it is extremely important to consider the development of tourism in the context of sustainable development. The importance of this topic indicates the necessity of global actions because poor environmental management in a country can have far-reaching consequences beyond its borders. The 2030 Agenda is a global framework for ending extreme poverty, combating inequality and injustice, and tackling climate change by 2030. It builds on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and is a set of 17 sustainable development goals and 169 related sub-goals. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should primarily contribute to poverty reduction, as well as inequalities and injustices, while addressing the causes and minimizing the consequences of climate change. Unlike the Millennium Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda is not focused only on developing countries but on all countries, because global cooperation is necessary to achieve these goals. The European Union has adopted the goals of sustainable development and is working on their implementation. Bulgaria and Serbia have also pledged to align their policies and actions with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Illustration 6 Sustainable Tourism and Sustainable Development Goals



Source: The T4SDG Platform (<http://tourism4sdgs.org/>)

The goals of sustainable development are interconnected since the key to the success of one goal often lies in perceiving the challenges inherent in another goal. Sustainable tourism is firmly positioned in Agenda 2030. It is particularly linked to the achievement of objectives 8, 12 and 14. However, to achieve the objectives, set out in this Agenda, a clear framework for implementation, adequate funding and investment in technologies, infrastructure and human resources should be applied. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism has the potential to contribute (directly or indirectly) to all goals. An overview of the goals of sustainable development and the place of tourism in the 2030 Agenda is given below².

SDG 1	As one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world, tourism is in a good position to boost economic growth and development at all levels and provide income by creating new jobs. Sustainable tourism development and its impact at the community level can be linked to national poverty reduction goals, those related to the promotion of entrepreneurship and small businesses, and the empowerment of less privileged groups, especially young people, and women.
NO POVERTY: End poverty in all its forms everywhere	

² Source: UNWTO. Tourism in the 2030 Agenda <https://www.unwto.org/tourism-in-2030-agenda>

SDG 2	Tourism can boost agricultural productivity by promoting local indigenous products, using, and selling local products in tourist destinations, and integrating them fully into the tourism value chain. In addition, agritourism is a growing tourist segment and can complement traditional agricultural activities. The resulting revenue growth in local communities can lead to sustainable agriculture, while increasing the value of the tourism experience.
ZERO HUNGER: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	

SDG 3	The contribution of tourism to economic growth and development can also have an impact on health and well-being. Foreign earnings and tourism tax revenues can be reinvested in health and services, which should aim to improve maternal health, reduce child mortality, and prevent disease, among other things.
GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	

SDG 4	A well-trained and skilled workforce is crucial to the progress of tourism. The sector can provide incentives to invest in education and training and assist labour mobility through cross-border agreements on qualifications, standards, and certificates. In particular, young people, women, senior citizens, indigenous peoples, and those with special needs should benefit through educational resources, where tourism has the potential to promote inclusion, values of tolerance, peace and non-violence and all aspects of global exchange and citizenship
QUALITY EDUCATION: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	

SDG 5	Tourism can empower women in a number of ways, in particular by providing jobs and income-generating opportunities in small and large tourism and hospitality businesses. As one of the sectors with the largest share of employed women and entrepreneurs, tourism can be a tool for women to unlock their potential, helping them to fully engage and lead in all aspects of society.
GENDER EQUALITY: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	

SDG 6	Tourism can play a crucial role in achieving access to water and safety, as well as hygiene and sanitation for all. Efficient water uses in the tourism sector, together with appropriate safety measures, wastewater management, pollution control and technological efficiency can be key to protecting the most valuable resource.
CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION: Ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	

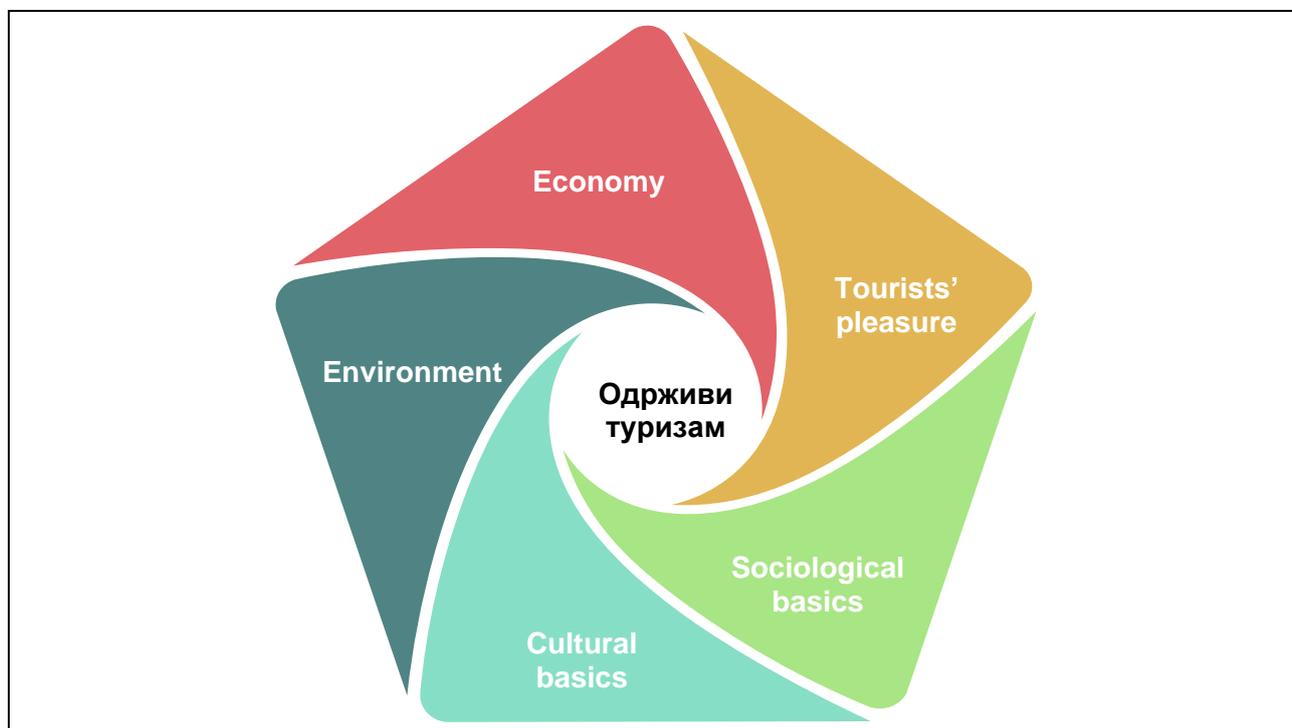
SDG 7	As a sector that requires significant energy input, tourism can accelerate the transition to renewable energy sources and increase their share in the world. Accordingly, by promoting healthy and long-term investments in sustainable energy sources, tourism can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, mitigate climate change, and contribute to innovative and new energy solutions in urban, regional, and remote areas.
AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all	

<p style="text-align: center;">SDG 8</p> <hr/> <p>DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH: Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all</p>	<p>Tourism is one of the driving forces of global economic growth and generates 330 million jobs (1 in 10 jobs) worldwide. Through direct, indirect, and induced effects in the economy, tourism creates jobs for young people and women and vulnerable communities. By providing access to decent work opportunities in the tourism sector, society - especially young people and women - can benefit from increased skills and professional development. The sector's contribution to job creation has been recognized in Goal 8.9 to design and implement policies by 2030 to promote sustainable job-creating tourism and promote local culture and products.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SDG 9</p> <hr/> <p>INDUSTRY, INOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</p>	<p>Tourism development relies on good public and private infrastructure. The tourism sector can influence infrastructure policy, making it more sustainable, innovative and resource efficient. At the same time, it is a means of attracting tourists and other sources of foreign investment. This should also facilitate further sustainable industrialization, necessary for economic growth, development, and innovation. Priorities are investments in eco-design, new equipment, and technologies in the use of energy and water resources, renewable energy sources, waste recycling equipment and materials and continuous training of staff.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SDG 10</p> <hr/> <p>REDUCED INEQUALITIES: Reduce inequality within and among countries</p>	<p>Tourism can be a powerful tool for community development and inequality reduction if it engages the local population and all key actors in its development. Tourism can contribute to urban renewal and rural development and reduce regional imbalances by giving communities the opportunity to thrive in their place of origin. Tourism is also an effective means for developing countries to participate in the global economy.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SDG 11</p> <hr/> <p>SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable</p>	<p>A city that is not good for its citizens is not good for tourists. Sustainable tourism has the potential to improve urban infrastructure and universal accessibility, promote the regeneration of decaying areas and preserve the cultural and natural heritage, the wealth on which tourism depends. Greater investment in green infrastructure (more efficient transport facilities, reduced air pollution, preservation of heritage and open spaces, etc.) should result in smarter and greener cities from which not only residents but also tourists can benefit.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SDG 12</p> <hr/> <p>RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</p>	<p>The tourism sector that adopts sustainable consumption and production practices can play a significant role in sustainable development. To this end, it is necessary to develop and implement tools to monitor the impact of sustainable development on sustainable tourism that creates jobs, promotes local culture and products. These tools include monitoring energy consumption, water, waste generation, biodiversity status and job creation.</p>

<p>SDG 13</p> <p>CLIMATE ACTION: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</p>	<p>Tourism contributes but is also affected by climate change. Participants in tourism should play a key role in reducing climate change. By reducing energy consumption and switching to renewable energy sources, especially in the transport and accommodation sector, tourism can help meet one of the most urgent challenges of our time.</p>
<p>SDG 14</p> <p>LIFE BELOW WATER: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development</p>	<p>Coastal and maritime tourism are important tourist segments, especially for small island developing states. They rely on healthy marine ecosystems. Tourism development must be part of integrated coastal zone management to help preserve and preserve fragile marine ecosystems and serve as a means to promote the blue economy and thus contribute to the sustainable development of marine resources (protection of marine ecosystems and marine animals, pollution reduction, waste, and wastewater treatment), informing guests and employees in tourism, involving the local community).</p>
<p>SDG 15</p> <p>LIFE ON LAND: Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss</p>	<p>The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes the sovereign right of each signatory state to dispose of its resources and biodiversity, but states are expected to provide support in the protection of biodiversity and the sustainable use of components of biodiversity. Magnificent landscapes, untouched forests, rich biodiversity, and natural heritage sites are often the main reasons why tourists visit the destination. Sustainable tourism can play a major role in the sustainable management of sensitive areas, not only in preserving and protecting biodiversity, but also in providing income to local people to provide them with an alternative source of income.</p>
<p>SDG 16</p> <p>PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels</p>	<p>Tourism encourages the encounters of billions of people from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the tourism sector can foster multicultural and inter-religious tolerance and understanding, thus building the foundations of world peace. Sustainable tourism, which benefits and engages the local community, can also provide a source of livelihood, strengthen cultural identity, and encourage entrepreneurial activity, thus helping to prevent violence and conflict. Tourism contributes to peace in post-conflict societies. Raising awareness of human rights, strengthening local entrepreneurship, employing local people, and encouraging the sale of local products, respecting diversity, treating guests, and involving the local population are some of the measures that can contribute to achieving this goal.</p>
<p>SDG 17</p> <p>PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development</p>	<p>Due to its cross-sectoral nature, tourism has the potential to strengthen public-private partnerships and engage more stakeholders: international, national, regional, and local - to work together to achieve sustainable development goals and other common goals.</p>

Sustainable tourism is based on an integral and complex approach that places equal emphasis on five components: environmental protection, affirmation of social integrity, nurturing cultural features, affirmation of social integrity, nurturing cultural features of the local population, optimal satisfaction of tourist needs and economic profit. That is why sustainable tourism is schematically presented as a pentagon (illustration below), because at the same time it contributes to the achievement of goals at five different levels, none of which must become dominant in relation to the others. This concept sets such a model that will maximally emphasize the positive relationships between the mentioned categories of goals, and negative awareness to a minimum.

Illustration 7 Sustainable tourism

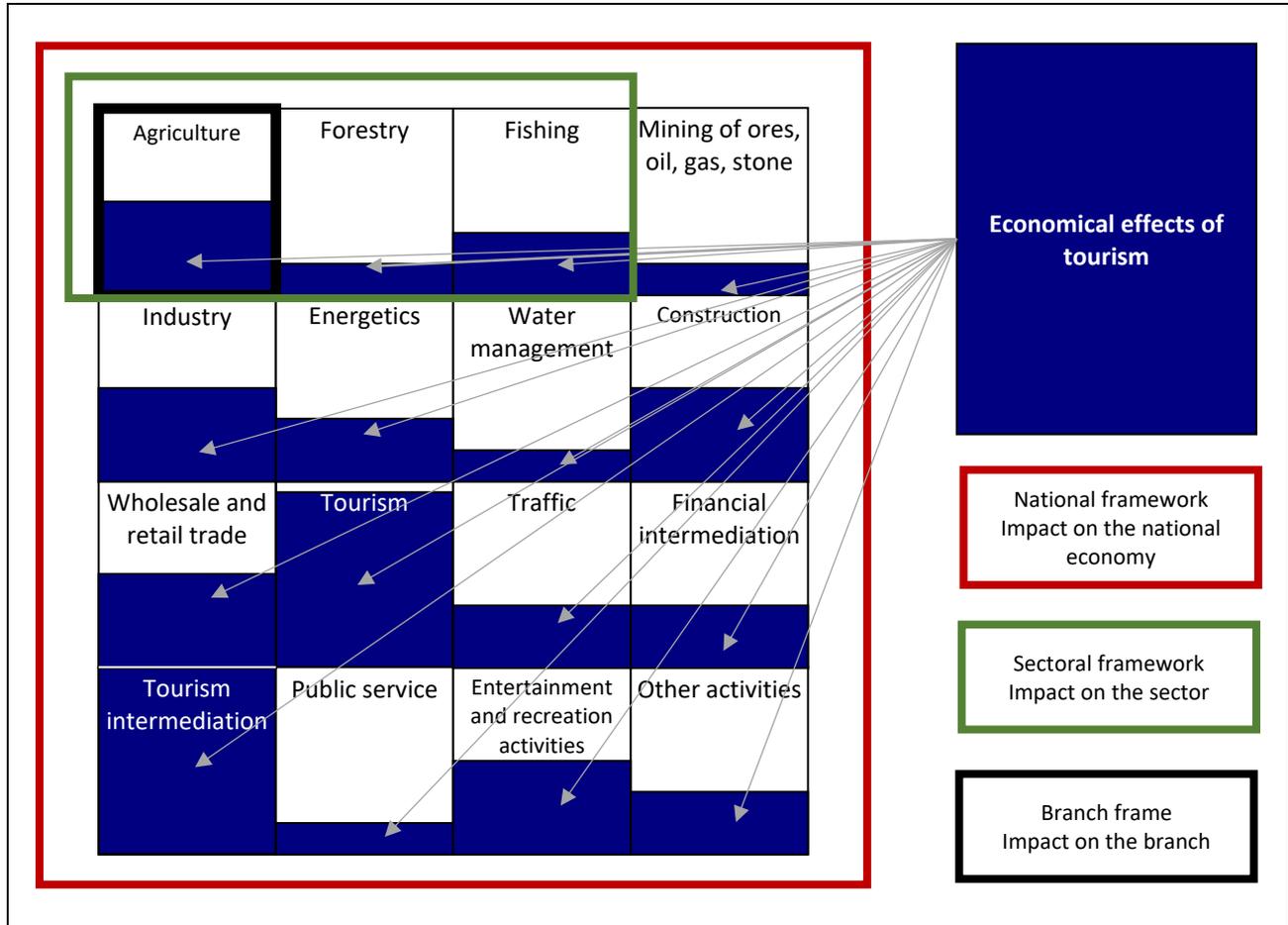


Source: Jovičić, D. Turizam i životna sredina - koncepcija održivog razvoja, Zadužbina Andrejević, Beograd 2000.

Tourism is one of the most dynamic and promising activities in the overall economy. Until the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, tourism revenues grew steadily and accounted for about 1.5% of the world's social product, over 8% of the value of total world exports, and about 35% of world trade in services. Tourism has a direct and indirect impact on the national economy and employment growth. According to revenues and turnover, economic activity is important in many ways (illustration below). The most significant economic effects of tourism are the impact on social product and national income, the impact on the country's balance of payments through so-called invisible imports and exports, the impact on the development of underdeveloped sectors of the economy and areas and the impact on employment. Tourism is spent in the place of production, so the tourist must travel to the destination and make consumption there, creating an opportunity for the development of local businesses of all kinds and enabling local communities to earn money through the informal economy, by selling goods and services directly to visitors. Tourism is a more diverse industry than many others. It has the potential to support other economic activities, both through the provision of flexible, redundant jobs, which can complement other activities, and through revenue generation through a more complex supply chain of goods and services. Tourism is labour-intensive and provides a wide range of different employment opportunities especially for women and young people. Which is strongly represented in the hospitality sector. Positive economic factors of tourist consumption in the destination are realized through the multiplied effect of money, i.e., the circulation of money through sectors of the economy, when the change of monetary and economic level, production and sales are accelerated. The money that tourists spend directly represents direct income. This consumption goes to tourism companies that provide goods and services to tourists, which serve vacations (for example, accommodation, food, excursions, etc.).

Travel companies will then spend a portion of this earned income, procuring goods and services from their suppliers, allowing them to meet their obligations to tourists. Examples are tourist jobs such as the provision of various services or the separation of part of the funds from the entrance fees for guide per diems and the like. In addition, tourism has an indirect and induced impact on the economy. Indirect impacts are those that arise as a result of a reaction to money in the form of local business transactions. For example, it could be a new investment by a hotel owner in equipment and supplies. Induced impacts are those that arise from additional income and that arise due to additional consumption. For example, it is the purchase of goods and services of hotel employees.

Illustration 8 Economic effects of tourism



Tourism has an important and positive role in the socio-economic development of many countries, contributing to cultural exchange, the improvement of international relations and world peace. However, a large number of tourist destinations have experienced the negative consequences of tourism development for the environment, culture, and society, thus calling into question the expediency of tourism as a development option. Some of the important aspects of the negative consequences are:

- economic aspects: influence of seasonal factors on tourism business, competition, possible high import dependence which significantly reduces the realized foreign exchange inflow from tourism, consequences of globalization, share of unskilled and poorly paid jobs in total employment, destruction of traditional forms of employment (agriculture, fishing).
- socio-cultural aspects: loss of cultural identity, disappearance of the traditional value system, endangerment of human rights, crime, prostitution, etc.
- environmental aspects: emissions of harmful gases from tourist vehicles, huge use of resources and waste production, significant water consumption, use of land for tourist purposes, etc.

The negative consequences of the extremely intensive development of tourism have imposed the need to place this activity under the auspices of sustainable development. Mass tourism definitely has a negative impact on the environment and local communities to such an extent that after a certain, even relatively short period of time, it endangers natural and cultural resources to such an extent that it can no longer function economically justifiably. With proper planning and tourism development, these worse impacts can be reduced. In this position, the destination, local community, state, and tourists would share the positive benefits of economic development, among which the most important are employment, increased traffic and consumption by visitors, increased living standards, strengthening infrastructure and improving investment in this sector, as well as other results of positive influences. When creating tourism development policies, the positive and negative impacts of tourism on sustainable development must be considered (table below).

Table 2 The effect of tourism of sustainable development

Positive effects	Negative effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures the economic development of an area, affects the employment of the population, encourages investment, and provides support to local communities. • Influences the definition of the economic value of natural and cultural resources, which results in the creation of income intended for the protection of natural and cultural heritage. • It contributes to understanding between different cultures and nations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates direct pressure on sensitive ecosystems causing their degradation and disturbance of flora and fauna. • It puts pressure on local communities and influences their traditions • Affects the unfavourable consumption of natural resources, especially water and land • contributes to global pollution

Finding the right balance between the autonomous development of destinations and their protection on the one hand and the development of competitive economic activity on the other is a challenge for a tourist destination. Sustainable development of the destination implies protection, improvement, sustainable use of existing natural and created resources and valorisation of existing tourist potentials. To be sustainable, tourism must:

- i. guarantees the optimal use of natural resources and biodiversity that are the basis of tourism development, through the support of important ecological processes and the protection of natural heritage.
- ii. supports the socio-cultural heritage of local communities, protects their architectural and other traditional heritage, to contribute among cultural understanding and tolerance.
- iii. ensure long-term economic growth, providing economic benefits for all relevant participants in the process.

Sustainable tourism is a development concept that will balance the environmental, socio-cultural, economic components of the environment and tourist satisfaction. This concept helps us to find the optimal form of tourism development that will not degrade resources in order for future generations to meet their tourism needs. Sustainable development implies the existence of limits of development determined by the current state of technology and social organization in relation to the environment, as well as the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. In the context of sustainable development, economic development, social development, and environmental protection are considered to be interdependent and mutually supportive components of sustainable development, which is an appropriate framework for directing efforts towards achieving a higher quality of life for all people. In order to prevent and limit the negative effects of tourism on nature, many countries, in parallel with the policy of tourism development, implement a policy of nature protection.

Recommendations for nature protection from tourism are formulated by numerous international organizations, including the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This organization proposes the following activities at the national level:

1. **Norms and regulations:** Adoption of appropriate norms, regulations, and laws at the national level. This also applies to tourist destinations that should meet the needs of tourists in terms of environmental protection. In tourist regions, the norms must be determined in accordance with the requirements of tourists in terms of health, leisure, and relaxation. All aspects of tourism development should be in accordance with the environmental conditions of a particular region, especially when it comes to mountains and regions, where the harmonization of tourism with the environment must consider both agriculture and forestry.
2. **Spatial-planning measures:** In order to protect natural, cultural, and architectural resources, it is necessary to develop guidelines that will be respected in the development and adoption of tourism development plans, especially when it comes to water and air quality, land protection, preservation of natural and cultural heritage, and similarly. The responsible authorities should pay special attention to tourist zones and problems related to seasonal demand, waste and wastewater treatment, noise, construction density control, traffic regulation and the like. It is necessary to take measures for even time distribution of demand. Decisions on tourism development plans should be made on the basis of as complete information as possible regarding the impact of tourism on the environment. In doing so, all alternative options must be considered, considering local conditions and space capacity. It is necessary to constantly monitor the state of preservation of the environment in tourist regions, in order to assess the changes that have occurred and to take appropriate protection measures in a timely manner.
3. **Specific role of government:** It is necessary to identify the following types of regions: developed tourist regions whose capacity can be further increased, areas that offer opportunities for development as new tourist regions, areas that require restoration measures from an environmental point of view. Certain spatial indicators can be used for this purpose.
4. **Informing and public participation:** It is necessary to constantly inform the public about the need to preserve nature, especially valuable and sensitive areas. This type of action can be done through various media, TV spots, posters, brochures, school education for young people and the like. When making decisions on the development of tourism and nature protection measures, it is desirable that the local population participates as actively as possible.
5. **Financial aspects:** Given that revenues from tourism are not always sufficient to cover the costs of environmental protection, governments should, within their means, bear part of these costs. Each tourism development plan, at the national, regional, and local level, should include a financial assessment of costs and benefits for a particular environment, and should provide a way to finance protection measures. The main sources of financing environmental protection in tourist regions and places can be sojourn tax; taxes on real estate and various economic activities; income from tickets for beaches, parking lots, then from tolls, tolls, and the like income from issuing hunting and fishing licenses; revenues from betting fees and gambling in casinos; direct compensation for environmental damage; costs of prevention and protection in case of potential pollutants and the like.
6. **Protection of tourists from users of resources:** It is necessary to preserve the integral value of tourist resources in order for them to meet the expectations and needs of tourists. Receptive regions should provide such an environment that will have a positive effect on the health of tourists and enable them recreation and relaxation. The personal safety of the tourist must be guaranteed. Tourists should also be provided with appropriate hospitality, which largely depends on the attitude of the local population towards tourism and tourists.

Tourism development must be guided by a carefully designed planning policy, which must not be exclusively a reflection of the desire for profit but is based on the ideals and principles of human well-being and happiness. A balanced development policy can bring the desired outcome of the tourism business and the protection of natural and cultural resources. Therefore, the problem of tourism planning is closely related to sustainable development.

The proven need to preserve the environment in tourism planning and organization, especially in light of the negative interactions between tourism and the environment in which it takes place, has become a common interest of government, NGOs, local communities, and the local sector. Each of these interest groups has a role in tourism development and in its own way is responsible for the impacts that tourism has on the environment, whether these impacts are positive or negative. A good planning process determines the definition of the desired result and realization in the direction of systematicity towards achieving the goals. The model of sustainable development that is applicable to tourism is shown in the table below. This global model was applied during the development of the Common Strategy. In order to increase the benefits of tourism and reduce the negative impacts, links have been established between the local community and other tourism entities.

Table 3 Sustainable development model - principles and goals³

Fundamental Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Holistic approach: development and environmental issues integrated within a global social. ▪ Futurity: focus on long-term capacity for continuance of the global ecosystem ▪ Equity: development that is fair and equitable and which provides opportunities for access to and use of resources for all members of all societies, both in the present and future
Development objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving the quality of life for all people. ▪ Satisfaction of basic needs. ▪ Building self-confidence and local decision making for local needs.
Sustainability objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimal depletion of non-renewable natural resources ▪ Sustainable use of renewable resources ▪ Pollution emissions within the assimilative capacity of the environment
Requirements for sustain-able development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adoption of a new social paradigm relevant to sustainable development. ▪ International and national political and economic systems dedicated to equitable development and resource use. ▪ Technological systems that can search continuously for new solutions to environmental problem ▪ A place that cares about the environment, also cares about tourists and their satisfaction.

Sustainable tourism requires informing all participants in tourism and making decisions by consensus. Also, sustainable tourism requires impact monitoring, including all adequate preventive measures when necessary. In the end, it is necessary for tourists in such a process to have a high level of satisfaction and experience which reflects a quality tourist product. In that sense, the Common Strategy develops a model that encourages the development of a tourist offer that **considers** the protection of nature and the environment and gives visitors a chance to learn more about the destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac.

³ Source: Sharpley, R., Tourism and Sustainable Development: exploring the theoretical divide, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, No. 8, 2000

4. Situational analysis

4.1 Elin Pelin

General characteristics: In honour of the great Bulgarian writer, in 1950 the place Novoselci i was renamed Elin Pelin, and in 1960 it was declared a city. The municipality of Elin Pelin as a tourist destination covers an area of 433.01 km² in the central part of the Sofia district. The administrative centre of the municipality is located 24 km east of the capital Sofia. The destination Elin Pelin occupies the eastern part of the Sofia plain and the slopes of the Stara Planina and Sredna gora. There are 19 settlements in this area. Elin Pelin Municipal Centre and eighteen villages (Bogdanlia; Churek; Doganovo; Eleshnitsa; Gabra; Gara Elin Pelin; Golema Rakovitsa; Grigorevo; Karapoltsi; Krushovitsa; Lesnovo; Musachevo; Novi han; Ognyanovo; Petkovo; Potop; Ravno pole and Stolnik). The relief is flat and hilly and mountainous. The central part of the municipality of Elin Pelin is located in the eastern part of the Sofia Valley (Sofijsko pole) with an altitude of 550 to 650 m. Northwest of the village of Ravno pole, in the bed of the Lesnovska river, is the lowest point of the municipality at 530 m above sea level. The south-eastern slopes of the mountain stretch in the northern part of the municipality. In the extreme north of the municipality, where the borders connect with the municipality of Sofia and the municipality of Botevgrad, it rises to the top of the mountain Murgash at 1687 m above sea level. In the southern parts of the municipality of Elin Pelin, the northern branches of Ihtimanska Sredna Gora stretch, and within its borders, parts of three mountains enter, which are part of Ihtimanska Sredna Gora. South of the Sofia plain are the eastern parts of Lozenska Mountain. On the border with the Sofia municipality, northwest of the village of Gabra, the peak of Popov Deo rises to 1190.2 m above sea level. Southeast of the Sofia plain, the northernmost slopes of the Vakarelska mountain stretch. Its highest point is the peak Crveni Bregovi 1105.6 m above sea level, which is located northeast of the village Gabra. Agricultural areas occupy 54.04% of the territory (23398.18 ha), 37.62% is forest land, and 5.21% are urbanized areas (2257.18 ha). Forests cover 16287.78 hectares. The forest fund is dominated by deciduous forests with 98.95%. In terms of pedological composition, brown forest soils, rendzina and different types of meadow soils most often appear.

Climatic characteristics: The climate of the area is moderately continental. The trough-shaped basin in which Elin Pelin is located, in the shape of a horseshoe from the north, east and south in combination with mountain fences, contributes to the moderate continental climate. Average air temperature (July) 20.9 ° C. The average annual air temperature is 9.8 ° C, the amount of precipitation is around 640 mm, and the insolation is 2015 hours. The reported average annual temperature from the weather station Vakarel is 8.0 ° C, the average January temperature is -3.9 ° C, and the average July temperature is 18.1 ° C. The average annual temperature recorded at the Ihtiman meteorological station is 8.8 ° C, the average January temperature -2.9 ° C, and the average July temperature 19.0 ° C. Extreme temperatures in the municipality are observed in January and July.

Population: According to the National Statistical Institute, in 2019, Elin Pelin has 21,882 inhabitants. The population density is 50.53 inhabitants / km². Elin Pelin has 19 settlements, one of which has the status of an urban area and 18 with the status of a rural area (village). Relationship between men and women 49.4: 50.7 in favour of women. Compared to 2011, the total number of inhabitants decreased by 3.97%. The natural increase in the municipality is negative. The basic contingent of the population is able-bodied (59.6%). The social structure of economically inactive persons includes students 9.5%, pensioners 73.2% and persons employed with family obligations 11.2%.

Employment: The total number of employees in the municipality of Elin Pelin is 9,213 people. The largest percentage of employees is in the urban part of the municipality. According to NSI data for 2019, the unemployment rate is 3.69%. It engaged 5.02% of the total number of employees in tourism and related activities.

Nature: The territory of the municipality of Elin Pelin is rich in natural resources. Among the existing natural attractions are the mountain Murgas, Lake Ognyanovo, geothermal spring in the village Ravno Pole, geothermal spring in the village Eleshnitsa, protected area "Dolni Bogrov - Kazicene", protected area "Etropole - Baylovo", protected area "Sredna gora", protected locality "Eleshnitsa monastery".

Only parts of the protected areas are located on the territory of the municipality and they are part of a wider protected area that extends to neighbouring municipalities. An overview of natural attractions is given below.

Murgash Mountain	It is located in the extreme north of the municipality on the border with the municipality of Sofia and the municipality of Botevgrad. The top of this mountain is located at 1687 m above sea level. The mountain is interesting for hikers and nature lovers. Residents of the capital Sofia often visit this mountain.
Ognyanovo Lake	The artificial lake Ognyanovo with a volume of about 40 million m ³ has excellent preconditions for the development of water sports. The place is suitable for recreation, camping and fishing. The construction of pedestrian paths and landscaping has started around the lake. In the near future, these recreation and health trails are expected to attract a significant number of visitors.
Geothermal spring in the village of Ravno Pole	It is one of the three geothermal springs located in the municipality of Elin Pelin. The spring in the village of Ravno Pole has the status of state importance, where the mineral composition of the water and the flow enable the development of the balneological centre.
Geothermal spring in the village of Eleshnitsa	The geothermal spring in the village of Eleshnitsa instead of Toplika represents a potential for development.
Protected area "Etropole - Baylovo "	The protected area "Etropole - Baylovo" covers 27,448.25 ha. The area is extremely important for bear migration, as it provides adaptable habitats and is also a major area for bear population recovery. The area is protected under Directive 92/43 / EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna. By decisions of 12 December 2008, the European Commission included the area on the list of continental and alpine biogeographical regions of importance for the EU. The area includes parts of the villages of Golema Rakovitsa and Ognyanovo.
Protected area "Sredna Gora"	The protected area "Sredna gora" covers an area of 110,373.64 ha. Part of this protected area is located on the territory of the municipality. The area is known for its beautiful deciduous beech and oak forests. It is also the most suitable habitat for bears. The area is protected under Directive 92/43 / EEC for the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna. By its decisions of 12 December 2008 and 16 November 2012, the European Commission included the area on the list of continental and alpine bio-geographical sites of importance for the EU. The area covers a small part of the territory of the municipality and covers the village of Golema Rakovitsa.
Protected area "Dolni Bogrov - Kazicene"	The protected area "Dolni Bogrov Kazicene" covers an area of 2251.18 ha. The area is of international importance for globally endangered pond birds that breed there. In winter, this area does not freeze due to mineral springs. The area is protected under Directive 79/409 / EEC on the protection of wild birds. Within the area is the village of Ravno Pole.
Protected site "Eleshnitsa monastery"	The protected site "Eleshnitsa Monastery" is of national importance and represents a valuable cultural monument and territory with a characteristic landscape. This area covers an area of 3.5 ha. A small part of the territory of the municipality of Elin Pelin is included in protected areas and in the ecological network NATURA 2000. Of the total area of the municipality 1.9% of the territory falls under protected areas under the Birds Directive and 2.0% falls under protected areas under the Habitats Directive. The subject of protection are 48 species of birds, 16 species of mammals, 6 species of amphibians and reptiles, 5 species of fish, 13 species of invertebrates and two plant species. There is one protected tree on the territory of the municipality.

Cultural heritage: The area of Elin Pelin is one of the best-preserved centres of Shoppe culture and tradition (typical hard speech, white clothes, characteristic folk dances, songs, and humour). The traditions of the local population express their annual manifestation at the Shoppe Festival in the town of Elin Pelin, which has been held from 1970 until today. The common characteristic of the inhabitants of Elin Pelin (better known as Shops) is that they are extremely kind hosts and great friends. Numerous immovable cultural values have been preserved on the territory of the municipality. A total of 136 immovable cultural values of national and local significance were registered. 55 archaeological monuments, 53 architectural and construction monuments, 14 architectural and construction monuments from the time of antiquity and the Middle Ages, 10 historical monuments, 3 artistic monuments and 1 ethno monument stand out. Research confirms the existence of settlements, fortifications, and a developed road network since the time of the Thracians. The Sofia plain was the centre of peoples and cultures because important roads that connected Asia and Western Europe passed there. One of them passes through the territory of the municipality of Elin Pelin and that is Trajan's Way from the 2nd century. Thracian settlements, tombs and finds that testify to the high spiritual and material culture of antiquity. Roman and Byzantine culture also left significant traces. Near the village of Lesnovo, next to the Roman road (III century), there was a large transit station called "Buragara" (also known as Bugarka). Southwest of the town of Elin Pelin, the archaeological remains of a watchtower and a small settlement from the 4th century were discovered and studied, as well as the remains of a later Slavic settlement. 4 km north of the village of Eleshnitsa is the Eleshnitsa Monastery "Holy Assumption of the Mother of God" - a cultural monument of national importance, which preserves frescoes from the fifteenth - fifteenth century. The monastery is part of the so-called "Sofia's Little Holy Mountain". In the village of Novi Han, the remains of a Turkish caravanserai (khan) built in the seventeenth century have been preserved. It occupied an area of 20 hectares, was surrounded by strong walls and could accommodate 1,000 horsemen in its yard. Three kilometres south of the village of Novi Han are the ruins of a Thracian settlement with a fortress wall. In several places west of the village there are remains of Roman settlements. In the town of Elin Pelin, there is the church of "Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker", built in 1846, which is a cultural monument because of its valuable frescoes. Among the sights in the municipality are the cell school in the village of Doganovo, built in 1835, the monument to the fallen rebels of Botevo near the village of Eleshnitsa, the monastery "St. Dimitar" near the village of Gabra from 1867 and the monastery of Ravnopoljski. A monument to the great Bulgarian writer (Dimitar Ivanov Stoyanov, better known by the pseudonym Elin Pelin) is located in the city centre. Cultural activities in the municipality of Elin Pelin are represented by several cultural institutions, among which the most important are Community Centres or social homes (Chitalishte)⁴. As complex cultural places, they have a long tradition. Today, they represent centres of mass cultural activity such as libraries, clubs, music schools and other cultural activities. In the town of Elin Pelin, since 1985, there is a museum collection at the reading room "Elin Pelin", and since 1997, a permanent ethnographic exhibition has been opened - "Life and culture of shops". Since 2012, there have been 16 reading rooms in the municipality of Elin Pelin. The reading room in the town of Elin Pelin was founded in 1896 under the name "Samorazvoj" in the then village of Novoselci (today's town of Elin Pelin). The Chitalishte is a cultural centre where the following work and activities work: Shopski ensemble for folk songs and dances, Women's folk choir, Folklore singing group, Ensemble for old city songs, Children's vocal group "Zvona", Music piano school, Museum collection with permanent ethnographic display. Since 1997, a Craft Centre for making Bulgarian folk costumes from all regions of the country has been opened in the reading room. The reading room has two halls - a large (cinema hall) with 320 seats and a small one with 80 seats. The "Stefan Stefanov" brass band works within the "Svetlina" social home. The orchestra has a fifty-year tradition and was the first of its kind created in the country. Since 1981, a fan group has been formed with the orchestra. Library activity in the municipality is realized mainly through 27 libraries, of which 15 are reading and 12 are school. There is a library fund available in them, which includes over 280,000 library units. Museum activity is represented by museum collections - individual or in communities. In the municipal dock of culture, since 1985, there is a museum collection at the reading room "Elin Pelin", and since 1997, a permanent ethnographic exhibition has been opened, which represents the way of life and culture of the local population.

⁴ Community Cultural Centre - chitalishte (Bulgarian: читалище) is a typical Bulgarian public institution and building that fulfils several functions at once, such as a community centre, library, and a theatre. Today, community centres are the only focal points of cultural and community-based initiatives in smaller towns and villages. The equivalents of the institution in Serbia are the centres of culture.

There are 16 community homes (reading rooms) and 14 libraries in nineteen settlements in the municipality. On the territory of the municipality, 19 historical and cultural attractions have been identified that have tourist potential, namely: Ancient settlement; Historical site "Zerkovsko Dere"; Historic site "Radina Reka"; Late antique and early Byzantine fortress, site "Radin dol"; Late antique and early Byzantine fortress, site "Strazata"; Late antique early Byzantine fortress, site "Golemo Gradishte"; Late antique fortress, site "Kalet"; Eagle's Nest hut; Monument "Gocho Gopin"; Monument "Yordanka Nikolova"; Prehistoric settlement "Elin dol"; Roman Road - Trajan's Road; Old fortress, Cherni Vrah site; Thracian sanctuary "Klaov Kamik"; Church of the Holy Trinity; Church of St. Gregory; Church of St. Demetrius; Church of St. Nicholas; Church of St. Charalampus.

Economy: According to the National Concept of Spatial Development, the municipal centre of Elin Pelin is defined as a city of IV level of micro-regional significance. Three sections of the railway network of Bulgaria in the total length of 27.8 km pass through the territory of the municipality. In the southern part - the section of the railway line Kalotina - Sofia - Plovdiv - Svilengrad, in the central part - the section of the railway line Sofia - Karlovo - Burgas and in the southernmost part - the last section of the railway line Vakarel - Gabra (station Cukurovo). Seven roads of the republican road network of Bulgaria with a total length of 86.9 km pass through the municipality in whole or in part: highway Trakia, highway Hemus, republic road I-1, republic road I-6, republic road I-8, republic road III-105, republic road III-6002. The main national gas and oil pipeline also passes through the territory of the municipality of Elin Pelin. Due to the proximity of the capital, the municipality of Elin Pelin is an industrial centre with a strong service sector. The structure of the economy consists of production with 19.96%, Energy and utilities with a share of 1.05%, Construction with 6.93%, Wholesale and retail trade 24.79%, Traffic and storage 8.40%, Accommodation and food services 10,29%, Information, and communication with 1.68%, financial and insurance activities with 1.47%. Real estate business with 2.1%, Administrative and support service activities with 2.94%, public administration and public institutions have a share of 3.99% in the structure of the economy, while education and health and social protection have an equal share in the structure of the economy, 4, 83%. Arts, entertainment, and recreation participate in the structure of the economy with 4.41%. Porcelain production, ceramic and refractory industries occupy an important place in the municipality. Industrial park "Elin Pelin" is a place of concentration of environmentally friendly light and high-tech industry. It is also the largest transport and logistics centre. The industrial park covers 160 ha and is fully provided with infrastructure. The advantages of the industrial park are the proximity of the capital and access to important infrastructure facilities and connections, as well as the largest Bulgarian airport, proximity to the main roads E79, E83, E871 and E772 and proximity to two railway stations (Elin Pelin and Stolnik), which have good technical infrastructure. The strategic position, combined with the infrastructure, provides companies with good business and development opportunities. Utility activities are performed by the company "BKD-Elin Pelin". The main activities of this company are snow removal, maintenance and repair of street and road network and ancillary facilities, pedestrian areas, horizontal and vertical road signs, collection, transport and disposal of waste, maintenance of rivers and other water sources, maintenance of green areas, cleaning, and removal of unregulated landfills, etc⁵.

Tourism: The average annual number of visitors is 2670, the average annual number of tourist nights in Elin Pelin is 5875. Out of the total number of tourists who visited Elin Pelin, 75% are domestic and 25% are international tourists. The average tourist consumption is 30-50 EUR per person per day while the average length of stay is 2.2 days. The tourist infrastructure in the municipality of Elin Pelin is in the development phase. According to the National Tourist Register, 50 business entities provide catering and tourist services on the territory of the municipality (data from October 2020). Travel organization services are performed by two economic entities for which it is an additional activity within the transport of passengers. Accommodation is provided in hotels and resorts for short stays. A total of 12 facilities were registered, with a capacity of 71 rooms and 186 beds. Catering services are provided in 38 facilities, namely 13 restaurants, 5 fast food restaurants, 18 cafes and bars and 2 pastry shops.

⁵ Source: Municipality of Elin Pelin Annex № 1 of Decision №1100 - Protocol no. 44. / 31.01.2019.

The COVID 19 pandemic had a devastating effect on the tourism sector of Elin Pelin. Research within the diagnosis of value chains in tourism has shown that COVID 19 is the dominant factor that marked the business in 2020 (table below). Restrictive national measures to ban gatherings in order to prevent the spread of the epidemic have caused revenues for over 90% of businesses operating in tourism. At the same time, losses increased as a result of high fixed costs of maintaining tourist facilities. All this has affected employment in this sector which has been reduced by 30 to 50%. It is estimated that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of economic entities that provide catering and tourist services on the territory of the municipality has been reduced by 30% (data from February 2020). Some restaurants have found a short-term solution in the preparation and delivery of food on request. However, the realized revenues enable only a partial reduction of losses.

Table 4 Impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on the business of the tourism sector in Elin Pelin

A degree of the influence	Travel organizers	Accommodation providers	Catering service providers	Additional services and distributors
No influence	0,00%	0,00%	10,00%	0,00%
Mild influence	0,00%	0,00%	50,00%	25,00%
Significant influence	100,00%	100,00%	40,00%	75,00%

According to the mentioned research, the represented forms of tourism in Elin Pelin are festival tourism, cultural tourism, and business tourism. Elin Pelin has a conditionally developed business tourism due to its location, i.e., the proximity of the capital and the fact that it is the leading warehousing and distribution centre in Bulgaria. This logistics centre located in the Elin Pelin industrial zone is the headquarters of many foreign companies. Tourism works are manifested in its basic form, in the provision of catering and hotel services to workers working on the construction of facilities within the industrial zone. Tourism of special interests in the form of golf recreation is represented in the municipality of Elin Pelin. This type of tourism relies on sports and recreational infrastructure, ie the golf course "St. Sophia". The golf course is located in the village of Ravno Pole and covers an area of 526.32 ha. The course offers a unique combination of a modern golf course, a modern restaurant, and a spa. Festivals and manifestations take special attention in Elin Pelin. 11 festivals and events have been identified, which annually attract a large number of visitors from the country and abroad. Every year, the municipality organizes cultural and entertainment events such as:

National Mummies Festival "Na gosti u Shopsko"; National Festival "A celebration of love and wine"; Celebration of authentic folklore "Choina" Village Musachevo; Celebration "Gentle Strings"; National Folklore Festival "Lazaritsa"; National Folklore Festival "Na horo pri Shopite"; National Festival of Guitars and String Instruments "Spring Strings"; National Festival "Shopski Praznik"; Traditional fair "Unity makes strength"; Children's Music Festival "Autumn Magic"; Todorovdan Festival; local celebrations etc. Rich and meaningful cultural life was recorded in the village of Gorna Malina. Every year, this village, in cooperation with the municipality of Elin Pelin, organizes celebrations and exhibitions. There are three manifestations that are of regional character: The tourist walks in the footsteps of the writer Elin Pelin; Festival of folk traditions and customs "to laughter and a long life"; the horse race. The other manifestations are of local character and these are exhibitions of paintings, ceramics, sculptures, textiles, photography, graphics, ecological and organic products. Cultural tourism is extremely developed in Elin Pelin. The fact that 19 cultural and historical attractions have been identified in Elin Pelin speaks for itself. An overview of significant tourist events organized within the tourist destination Elin Pelin is shown below. The author and owner of the photos that are placed below the description of these events that are held in Elin Pelin is Diana Dimitrova - Project Manager. The author has consented to the publication of these photographs in this part of the Common Strategy.

Descriptions of tourist manifestation - Elin Pelin

The name of manifestation:	National Festival "Shopski Praznik"
Place:	Elin Pelin
Time:	Holy Ghost Sunday
Organizer:	Municipality of Elin Pelin
Internet portal:	https://elinpelin.org/home.html
Visitors:	Visitors from Serbia, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Russia, and Greece

Manifestation description

The "Shopski Praznik" (Shoppe festival) is an event that is symbolic for the cultural calendar of the city, but also for the social life of the population and guests, with the desire to experience the joy of mutual joy together. Elin Pelin is an area with a preserved centre of shop identity and tradition. Its inhabitants have a strong spirit, they love their local songs, cars, customs. They are proverbial with their diligence, persistence, even stubbornness, cunning, but also with a sense of beauty, which can be seen in songs, strong people, and costumes. They keep the vow of the writer Elina Pelin, whose name the city proudly bears: "Songs are here - to get you out of the truth, to make you understand that you are a man." It is difficult to describe the character of Shoppe. Unpredictable in his actions, he is often ridiculed, and his ability to joke with others, but also with himself, is a proof of spiritual maturity and breadth. Without losing their sense of humour and the desire to have fun, the residents of Elin Pelin celebrate the "Shopski Praznik". The festival begins on the day of the Holy Spirit / Monday - the day after Pentecost /, when all the families from the city gather in the "Church" and continues throughout the week, and the culmination of the holiday is the last days - Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. In 2019, the municipality of Elin Pelin marked the fiftieth jubilee edition of "Shopski praznik".

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:	24. May "Day of Bulgarian Education and Culture and Slavic Literacy"
Place:	Elin Pelin
Time:	May 24 th
Organizer:	Municipality of Elin Pelin
Internet portal:	https://elinpelin.org/home.html
Visitors:	Native visitors from Bulgaria

Manifestation description

On the Day of Slavic Literacy and Bulgarian Culture - May 24, a parade is being organized in the municipality of Elin Pelin, in which schools, kindergartens from the city, amateur clubs from all Community Cultural Centres (Chitalishte) in the municipality are participating. The event ends with a concert in the square in the town of Elin Pelin

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:

1.November - Day of public educators

Place:

Elin Pelin

Time:

November

Organizer:

Municipality of Elin Pelin

Internet portal:

<https://elinpelin.org/home.html>

Visitors:

Native visitors from Bulgaria

Manifestation description

The municipality of Elin Pelin traditionally organizes many events on November 1 with the aim of paying tribute to the great Bulgarians, to preserve and pass on the memory of the ancestors to the young people who come after us. All this is especially important for national identity. The municipality of Elin Pelin is organizing a torchlight procession, in which all schools, Community Cultural Centres (Chitalishte) and sports clubs in the city participate.

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:	Jordan's Day - Ice Wheel at Epiphany
Place:	Elin Pelin
Time:	January 6 th
Organizer:	Municipality of Elin Pelin temple "St. Nicholas the Miracle Worker of Myra
Internet portal:	https://elinpelin.org/home.html
Visitors:	Native visitors from Bulgaria

Manifestation description

The celebration begins early in the morning in the church "St. Nicholas of Myra, the Miracle Worker" with the Divine Holy Liturgy. Then, a liturgical procession is organized from the temple to the Lesnovska river on the BLACK BRIDGE (entrance to the city from the village of Elin Pelin station), where the Great Epiphany Blessing, the men's round and the throwing of the Holy Cross into the river will take place. The men's ice wheel gathers people from Elin Pelin, who play in the ice river, accompanied by folk songs, waving the Bulgarian flag for health and prosperity. Traditionally, an Orthodox priest throws a cross into a river and it is believed that whoever pulls it out will be healthy throughout the year.

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:	Traditional celebration "Traditional assembly" Unity makes strength "
Place:	Village Novi Han, -Pobit Kamen, Municipality of Elin Pelin
Time:	August
Organizer:	Community Cultural Centre (Chitalishte) "Ivan Vazov - 1928" Village Novi Han Municipality of Elin Pelin
Internet portal:	https://elinpelin.org/home.html
Visitors:	Native visitors from Bulgaria

Manifestation description

The traditional assembly "Unity makes strength" is an occasion to remind ourselves of the strength of spirit and national self-consciousness, which can transcend the boundaries of division. The assembly called "Unity makes strength" is held in Pobit Kamen, where the border between the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia used to pass. In this holy land, the border between the two parts of our divided homeland has passed. That border has not existed since 1885. Amateurs from all Community Cultural Centres (Chitalishte) in the municipality are taking part in the assembly, and the event is becoming a celebration of the spirit, tradition, unification, and preservation of the Bulgarian heritage. The demonstration of this tradition and its power of unification is a solemn concert that is organized every year at this time. During the festival, a culinary exhibition-competition "Our Feast" is organized, which presents typical dishes from the surrounding settlements in the categories: bread, local dishes, fasting meals, pies, and pastries.

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:	National Festival of Guitar and String Instruments "Spring Strings"
Place:	Elin Pelin
Time:	April
Organizer:	Community Cultural Centre (Chitalishte) „Elin Pelin 1896“
Internet portal:	https://elinpelin.org/home.html
Visitors:	Native visitors from Bulgaria. All festival performances are free.

Manifestation description

The festival has several basic goals: Achieving cultural exchange, creating conditions for establishing contacts and cooperation between children from different schools in the municipality, the country and abroad, joining the cultural values of music. Seeking and popularizing young talents and providing opportunities for creative expression, interaction, and exchange of experiences between different teams, clubs, and schools in the country. Getting acquainted with new trends in the field of music. Enrichment and diversity of the repertoire of the collective, expanding their participation. Participants are grouped into different groups - individual performers (soloists); Ensembles: string instruments and orchestras: string orchestras or mixed orchestras, which have string instruments in their composition. String instruments are allowed: Harp, Baglama, Balalaika, Benjo, Bandura, Barbitos, Bastarda, Basetlja, Biva,

Bisernica, Brac, Buzuki, Vina, Viela, Viola, Viola da gamba, Cello, Vihuela, Gudok, Gusla, Gadulka, Didli bow, Domra, Aeolian harp, Inanga, Cinnamon, Kanun, Celtic harp, Guitar, Double bass, Koto, Lipinski, Lira, Lute, Mandolin, Mazanaki, Nikelarpa, Piano, Raba, Santoor, Bitch, Saz, Tambura, Teorba, Ud, Ukulele, Cymbal, Violin, Cistra, Citra, Changi, Cheng, Chitra Wines, Chuniri. After the competitive part of the program at the festival, there is a concert of guest performers, our friends, famous rock bands and performers.

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:	National Folklore Festival "Na horo pri Shopite"
Place:	Elin Pelin
Time:	April
Organizer:	Municipality of Elin Pelin Community Cultural Centres (Chitalishte) on the territory of the municipality of Elin Pelin Amateur groups from Bulgaria.
Internet portal:	https://elinpelin.org/home.html
Visitors:	Visitors from Bulgaria, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Romania

Manifestation description

The National Folklore Festival "Na horo pri Shopite" is included in the cultural calendar of the municipality of Elin Pelin. It is held on Independence Square in the town of Elin Pelin in early April. The aim of the festival is to popularize, preserve and develop Bulgarian dance folklore; uniting, uniting, fun and merriment through a unique folk dance art. Qualified expert jury of established experts in the field of Bulgarian dance folklore. The jury sits after the end of all performances and announces the ranking.

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:	National Folklore Festival "Lazaritsa"
Place:	Elin Pelin
Time:	National Folklore Festival "Lazaritsa" includes the spring holidays Lazar's Day (Vrbica), Flowers, Easter, and St. George's Day.
Organizer:	Municipality of Elin Pelin Community Cultural Centres (Chitalishte) on the territory of the municipality of Elin Pelin
Internet portal:	https://elinpelin.org/home.html
Visitors:	Visitors from Bulgaria, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Romania

Manifestation description

The national folklore festival "Lazaritsa" includes the spring holidays Lazar's Day, Flowers, Easter, and St. George's Day. The festival begins with a parade-parade of participants of folklore groups, dance groups and clubs from the National Chitalishte "Elin Pelin 1896" to the "Independence" Square, gr. Elin Pelin. The aim of the festival: To preserve for generations the rich folklore tradition, to renew and enrich our national dance and poetry cultural heritage; To encourage the processes of preservation and popularization of local and regional specifics of spring rituals, as part of the system of folk culture and its place in contemporary cultural processes. To arouse the interest of children and young people in learning the local folk tradition. The propositions reproduce spring customs, spring games and dances, ritual songs with emphasized local specifics, processed dances, and songs. All participants of the festival will be evaluated by a commission consisting of folklorists, ethnographers, specialists in dance and music folklore.

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:	National Festival "Feast of Love and Wine"
Place:	Elin Pelin Hall of the National Chitalishte "Elin Pelin 1896"
Time:	A weekend around Valentine's Day (February 14 th)
Organizer:	Community Centre (Chitalishte) "Elin Pelin 1896" gr. Elin Pelin, Municipality of Elin Pelin and Association "Shopkinya"
Internet portal:	https://elinpelin.org/home.html
Visitors:	Citizens and visitors of Elin Pelin

Manifestation description

In the month of love and wine / February 14th /, the traditional festival of old city songs "Holiday of love and wine" is held. Songs about love, affection, romance, and wine are the first phase of the festival - the competitive part of the participating performers. Over 200 performers of romantic songs from all over Bulgaria appear on the stage, with a stylish decor in the theme, and the professional jury evaluates them and classifies them into different categories. The second part, also fun, is the tasting of wine and cheese from local producers. The festival of old city songs "Feast of Love and Wine" is one of the favourite festivals - for participants and spectators. "Holiday of love and wine" is a festival, which is organized for the fifth year in a row in partnership with the municipality of Elin Pelin and the association "Shopkinya". This music festival has been established as one of the best festivals of old-town songs, hits, and author's songs, which aims to enable the presentation of groups performing old-town songs from all over Bulgaria, to revive and enrich the city's singing tradition, and to satisfy song admirers. It is divided into several categories: Groups, duets, and individual performers.

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:	National Mummers Festival "Na gosti u Shopsko"
Place:	Elin Pelin
Time:	February
Organizer:	Municipality of Elin Pelin Community Cultural Centres (Chitalishte) on the territory of the municipality of Elin Pelin Amateur groups from Bulgaria.
Internet portal:	https://elinpelin.org/home.html
Visitors:	Visitors from Bulgaria, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Romania

Manifestation description

Since time immemorial, the human soul has been the scene of two forces - good and evil. The conflict between them is eternal and their war is eternal. Man's destiny is unenviable because each of them tries to win him over to his side. He flatters him well with hope. Good is generous because the mind, wisdom, imagination, talent, strength and, most of all, the courage to fly after one's dreams and to have the courage to make them come true, like a precious stone. On the other side is Evil, which draws man into its world with a cunning flame in its eyes, filled with shadows of darkness and a hidden moon face. He is strong in his knowledge of human weaknesses and relies on them. The national masquerade festival "Away at the Shop", which is held every year in the city of Elin Pelin, Sofia region, is a holiday of eternal struggle, eternal desire to purify our souls. The louder the mummers (richly costumed men all over Bulgaria, who perform traditional rituals with the intention of frightening evil spirits), the more certain it is that they will drive away evil forces and spirits. Making mummer's masks is a kind of art. Most of them have a wooden construction. Multi-coloured threads, pieces of fabric, mirrors and other elements are glued to the mask. The mask must be ugly and frightening in order to "scare away" evil. The oldest masks are in the shape of a ram, a goat, and a bull. Some masks have two faces. On the one hand, the face is good-natured - a prickly nose, a smiling face. On the other hand, the nose is large and bumpy, and the face ominous. This shows the good and evil that coexist in the world. The festival is held every month in February, and information about its holding and applications for participation are published on the website of the municipality of Elin Pelin.

Manifestation photo



4.2 Leskovac

General characteristics: The city of Leskovac as a tourist destination is a city settlement and the administrative centre of the eponymous territorial unit and the Jablanica administrative district. Leskovac is the economic and cultural centre of the Jablanica district, which also includes the municipalities of Bojnik, Medvedja, Lebane, Vlasotince and Crna Trava. According to the Law on Territorial Organization of the Republic of Serbia of December 28, 2007, Leskovac received the status of a city. Leskovac is located in the north of the central part of southern Serbia, in the heart of the vast and fertile Leskovac valley. The Leskovac valley is one of the largest valleys in Serbia, which is 50 km long and 45 km wide. The valley is bordered by Babička gora (1098 m), Seličevica (903 m), Suva planina in the east, Radan (1409 m) and Pasjača in the west and Kukavica (1442 m) and Čemernik (1638 m) in the south. In the north, it is open towards Niška, and in the south, across the Grdelica gorge, towards the Vranje Bujanovac valley. The river Veternica flows through Leskovac, and the area of the town of Leskovac is located at an altitude of 210 to 240 meters above sea level. Leskovac is an important transit centre that connects the south of Europe (Greece), through Belgrade northwest Europe, through Pristina the Adriatic Sea and through Sofia and the Black Sea the Euro-Asian corridor. Distance of Leskovac from the capital (Belgrade) is 275 km. Leskovac is only 47 km away from the Constantine the Great Airport in Nis, and 286 km from the Nikola Tesla Airport in Belgrade. The highway Les - E75 (Corridor X) passes through the destination Leskovac, as well as the main road M-9 as well as the railway corridor X. Leskovac covers an area of 1025 km², of which 449 km² is in the urban and 576 km² in the rural zone. More precisely, urban land is 7122 ha, arable land 58851 ha, while under forests is 33652 ha, and the rest are watercourses and water surfaces in the amount of 2875 ha. There are a total of 144 settlements on the territory of the city, of which 141 are rural settlements, and three are urban settlements. In addition to Leskovac, urban settlements are also Grdelica and Vučje. Grdelica is a town that is 17 km away from Leskovac and is located on the main Moravian-Vardar artery, so the railway and the highway pass by it. Vučje is located 17 km from Leskovac and is the geographical centre of the area called Porečje.

Climatic characteristics: The climate is a mild temperate-continental climate with an average annual temperature of 11.10 ° C, the coldest month is January with an average temperature of 0 ° C, the warmest is July with an average daily temperature of 21.6 ° C and the annual amplitude is 22.3 ° C. The average precipitation for Leskovac is 625.4 mm. The average number of frosty days is 95.5, the average number of tropical days per year is 30.8. The average annual humidity is 73, the average number of clear days is 79, the average number of cloudy days is 112. The average number of days with snow per year is 35, the average number of days with snow cover per year is 49, the average number of days with fog is 29, and the average the number of days with hail per year is 1. The absolute temperature maximum of 43.7 ° C was measured on July 24, 2007, and the absolute minimum of -30.3 ° C, on January 13, 1985. The maximum rainfall of 92.0 mm was recorded on June 26, 1954, and the maximum height of the snow cover of 124 cm, on January 31, 1963.

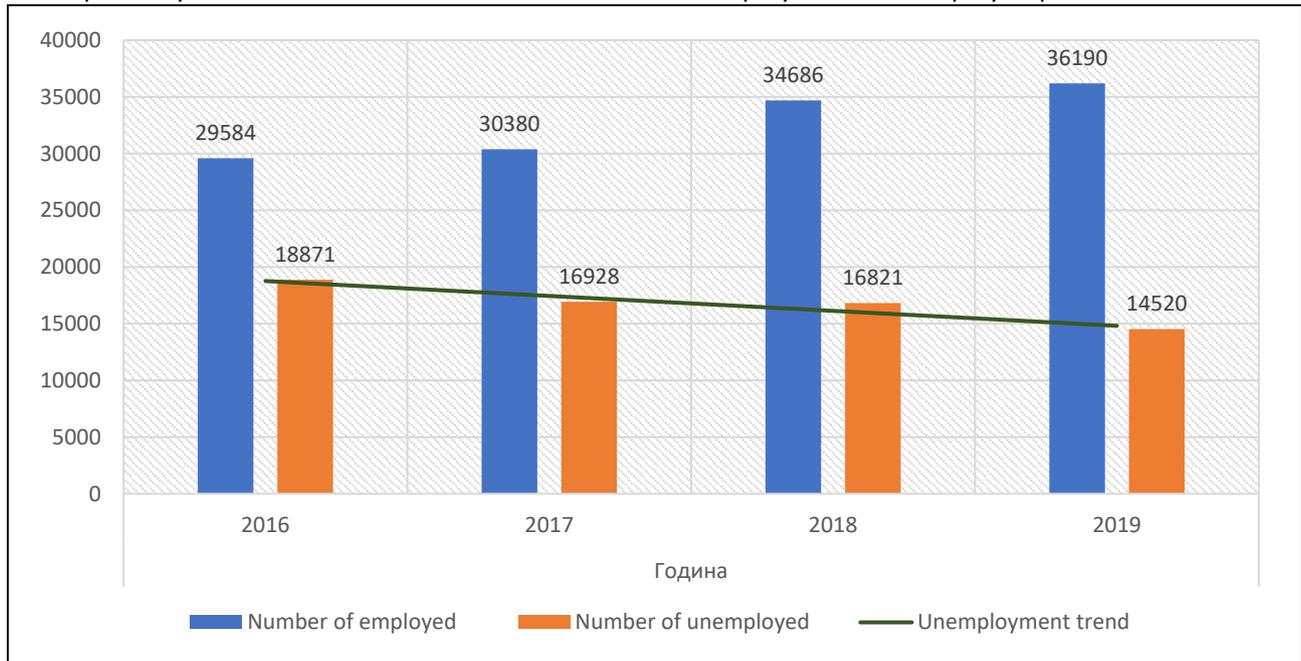
Population: According to the results of the 2002 census, there were 156,252 inhabitants in Leskovac, according to the data from the 2011 census, there were 144,206 inhabitants in the city, 12,046 less than in the 2002 census. It is estimated that in 2019, the number of inhabitants dropped to 134,285 inhabitants. The population density is 131 inhabitants per square kilometre. The average number of household members is 3.30. The urban population makes up 45.27% and the rural 54.73% of the total city population. The gender structure of the population is uniform. The educational structure of the population is unfavourable. The largest number of inhabitants, about 47%, have secondary education, and about 20% only primary education. Only 6% of the population has higher education⁶.

Employment: According to the SBS data for 2019, the number of total employees in the city was 36,190. The number of unemployed in the same period was 14,520. The period is characterized by an increase in total employment and a decrease in the number of unemployed persons (next chart). According to data for 2020, the structure of unemployed persons is as follows: without qualifications there are 3,906, with lower education and semi-qualified there are 273, qualified unemployed 4,462 and with secondary education there are 4,382, highly qualified 104, with higher education there are 379, and with a university degree has 1,449. In Leskovac, the average salary (gross) calculated for January 2021 was 68,148 RSD, or 577.53 EUR.

⁶ Source: Програм развоја туризма града Лесковца 2020 – 2025.

Most employees are in the food, pharmaceutical, wood, textile, and chemical industries, and outside the economy, most employees are in health and social care and education. A total of 1,043 people is employed in the tourism sector.

Graph 1 City of Leskovac - movement of the number of employed and unemployed persons 2016-2019



Nature: The tourist destination Leskovac as a Serbian five-pointed river and as a valley surrounded by mountains abounds in natural tourist attractions and locations that have high tourist potential. The slopes of Babička gora stand out from the existing natural attractions; Vucjanka River Canyon; Grdelica gorge; Mountain Kukavica; Radan Mountain; Slatinska river; Strict nature reserve - "Zeleniče"; Waterfall "Djokini virovi"; Protected area around the cultural property "Jašunjski manastiri"; Natural monument "Oskoruše tree" in the village of Sejanica; Natural monument "Kutleški hrast" in the village of Kutleš. An overview of natural attractions is given below.

Babička gora	The mountain is named after the village Babičko, which lies on the mountain, at about 500 m above sea level. It is wooded, abundant with game. The northern part of the mountain, which belongs to Zaplanje, is known by this name, while its southern part is known by the name Krusevica. It is mostly of island position, limited by faults towards the Barbeška, Zaplanja and Leskovac valleys. It is composed mainly of Precambrian green shales. The highest peak Kriva Buka 1.057m.
Vučjanka Canyon	The Vucjanka canyon is part of the valley of the Vucjanka river, a right tributary of the Veternica. The canyon is cut into the northern slopes of the Kukavica mountain and is located 18 km southwest of Leskovac. The canyon shape of the river valley took place below the village of Zbežišta and the Skolica stretch. The canyon is 2 km long, cut between the peaks of Kitka (988 m) and Samaric (619 m). The entrance to the canyon is at about 500 meters above sea level, and the exit is at about 340 meters above sea level. On a protruding cliff on the left bank of the canyon, 150 m above the river, is the Green City. At the exit from the canyon is the hydroelectric power plant Vucje, built in 1903. The riverbed in the canyon is full of "whirlpools", waterfalls, and cascades. "Whirlpools" attract special attention of people and actually represent stone pots or cauldrons. They are fluvial erosive forms that occur in places where strong evolution occurs, the vortical movement of water mass and the river material it carries. Over time, wells are formed in these places in the rocky riverbed.

Grdelica's Gorge	Grdelica gorge is the first narrowing in the composite valley of the South Morava in south-eastern Serbia. It is named after the town of Grdelica at the entrance to the gorge. It is 34 km long and 550 meters deep, cut into gneiss. It connects the Vranje and Leskovac valleys. The towns of Vladicin Han, Predejana and Grdelica are located in the gorge.
Kukavica Mountain	Mount Kukavica stretches in south-eastern Serbia on the left bank of the South Morava, in the Pcinj and Jablanica districts. It is bounded on the west by the river Veternica. It belongs to the Rhodope Mountains. The mountain massif of Kukavica is bounded on the east by the South Morava, on the west by Vučjanka, on the north by the Leskovac field, while on the south side it passes into the hilly-mountainous area of the Grdelica gorge. The nearest places are Vladicin Han, Grdelica and Vucje. The highest peak is Vlaina (1,442 m) which is located on the northern slopes, while on the southern slopes there are several peaks up to 1,400 meters high. Part of the mountain was protected in 1980 at the suggestion of the Republic Institute for Nature Protection. The area where the reserve is located belongs to the complex of mesophilic beech and beech-coniferous forest types.
Radan Mountain	Radan Mountain is located in southern Serbia, in the municipalities of Lebane, Bojnik, Medvedja, Kursumlija and Prokuplje. It belongs to southern Pomoravlje in a broader sense. It includes parts of the upper parts of the basins of Toplica, Pusta reka and Jablanica. It is elongated in the NW-SE direction. Radan also includes the massifs: Majdan, Sokolovica and Arbanasi Mountains. The highest peak is Šopot (1,409 m), and it covers an area of 466 km ² . The mountain is located at the place where the Dinarides face the Rhodopes (Rhodope or Serbian-Macedonian mass), which is important for the diversity of its relief, the complexity of geological composition and tectonic relations. There is not much to talk about nature on this mountain. Suffice it to say that the Institute for Nature Protection of Serbia gave a proposal for placing under protection as a good of exceptional importance.
Slatina River	The Slatina river is rich in various types of aquatic and coastal flora and fauna. There are also brown trout and crayfish, which are strictly protected species in Serbia. The Slatinska river consists of the Ogorelička river and Muratovica with a large number of smaller streams and rivers that spring in centuries-old beech forests. The water at the springs is drinkable and rich in mineral composition. In the lower course, the Slatinska river passes through Kopašnica and is called the Kopašnička river, which further flows into the South Morava.
Zeleničje	Zelenicje is a forest area below the Ostrozub mountain, in the source part of the Ostrozubska river, which flows into the Rupska river, inhabited by a laurel called "zelenicje". It is a strict nature reserve and is under state protection. It is known for the plant community Lauroceraso-Fagetum B. Jov. - a community of Moesian mountain beech (<i>Fagus moesiaca</i> Domin, Maly Czech.) With laurel (<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i> L. var. <i>Serbica</i> Panč.) [2] - which is popularly called "zeleničje" or "zeleniče". Due to the fact that it is a rare plant species in the world, this landscape, with an area of 42 hectares, was declared a strict nature reserve in 1950 and placed under state protection. This plant community is structured so that the floor of tall trees is dominated by the Moesian beech (<i>Fagus moesiaca</i>), and the floor of the tall shrub is dominated by greenery (<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>) and holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>).
Jašunja Monasteries	The protected area around the immovable cultural property "Jašunjski manastiri", with an area of 188.27 ha, with a coniferous and deciduous forest in which beech and oak predominate, on which mistletoe parasitizes, has been under protection since 1989.

The tree was pruned in the village of Sejanica near Grdelica.	The tree was pruned in the village of Sejanica near Grdelica. This plant belongs to the order of roses and grows slowly on hilly terrain, alone or in rare forests of oak, Turkey oak and hornbeam. The tree lives up to 500 years. Oblong pointed and serrated feathery leaves grow on a round, hairy, long stalk. Oskoruša bears between forty and fifty years of age, green-yellow, then reddish fruits, which are the most delicious as rot. The capital specimen of Oskoruša in Sejanica is protected as a significant natural asset due to its age of about 120 years, tree circumference of 2.7 m, height of 15 m and branched round magnificent canopy.
Pedunculate oak tree - record	The pedunculate oak tree - record, is located on a private plot in the area of the village of Kutles. The oak tree in the forest grows up to 40 m, with a diameter of over two meters. Due to the expansion of arable land in the area of the town of Leskovac, the oak has been mostly cleared. The lonely Kutleški oak near the Pusta river is about 300 years old, and in terms of dimensions and beauty it is a capital specimen protected as a significant natural asset.
Waterfall Djokini Virovi	Đokini virovi waterfall is a complex of two whirlpools in the middle part of the canyon of the river Vučjanka, a right tributary of Veternica. They are located 2 km from Vučje, in the immediate vicinity of the old hydroelectric power plant, which is still in operation. In its middle course, the Vučjanka River has cut a canyon valley a little over 2 km long, with accompanying phenomena such as waterfalls, cascades, and deep whirlpools. Joki's whirlpools are located in the narrowest part of the canyon, whose width at the upper whirlpool is only 5 meters. The right bank consists of the steep slopes of Petokraka (1041 m), and the left slopes of Kitka (645 m). The upper vortex is about 15 meters wide, about 5 meters long with a depth of 2.5 meters. It is located under the Upper Waterfall (9 meters high), while the water flows out of the pool by the Lower Waterfall (about 11 meters) and falls directly into the lower pool. The lower whirlpool is about 20 meters wide, 10 meters long, with a depth of 4.5 meters. The water temperature in the whirlpools is around 23 ° C in summer, while the transparency of the upper whirlpool is complete (2.5 m), while the lower whirlpool is relatively opaque, and the water appears completely black. The whirlpools are a favorite place for swimming, primarily for younger swimmers, due to the relatively inaccessible terrain. During the high-water level, the upper whirlpool is practically inaccessible. At a length of 600 meters, there are the following places suitable for swimming: Bathtubs, relatively small in size, but with extremely hot water; Jaz whirlpool below a 20-meter-high waterfall, larger than Djokina, but with a depth of only 1.5 meters; through smaller whirlpools to the hydroelectric power plant and finally the largest and most visited whirlpool Devkazan 100 meters downstream from the hydroelectric power plant, where it is also the end of the most picturesque part of the canyon.

Cultural heritage: Leskovac was first mentioned as a town in 1395, when the nun Efimija (Princess Milica), with her sons Vuk and Stefan, gave it to the monastery of St. Panteleimon's house and two of her men in Leskovac. According to the legend, more than 600 years ago, Leskovac was named after the hazelnut that grew in the area of the now dried-up lake, below the hill Hisar. Numerous cultural and historical goods testify to the tradition in the culture of the city. The Greek historian Herodotus mentions in the 5th century BC that there was a certain Illyrian (Dardanian) settlement on the site or near today's Leskovac, around which hemp was grown. In the 2nd century, after the conquest of Hire, the Romans came to this area. We do not find any mention of the life of our Slavic ancestors in this area until the 12th century, when the area around today's Leskovac under the name Glubočica (Dubočica) was given to Stefan Nemanja by the Greek Emperor Manojlo. During the reign of Emperor Dušan and immediately after his reign, certain villages in Dubocica, including Leskovac itself, were donated to monasteries. The French geographer Ami Bue wrote in 1837 that Leskovac had 3,000 houses (2,400 Christian, 500 Turkish, 30 Roma and 10 Jewish) and a total of 15,000 inhabitants.

Legend has it that Leskovac was named after the hazel plant that grew in the area of the former drained lake, which was located below the hill of Hisar near the present town. The settlement was named Leskovac after her more than 600 years ago. The key features and tourist potential are 20 historical and cultural attractions of the city, namely: the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Leskovac; "Odžaklija" -Old Church of the Holy Mother of God in Leskovac; Church of St. Elijah on Hisar; Church of St. Petka in Rudare; Church of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist in Vučje; Church of St. Petka in Kumarevo; Church of St. Nicholas in Čukljenik; Jasunjski monasteries; Rudare Monastery; Empress' city; Ethno-archaeological park on Hisar; Gradac site; Roman necropolis in the village of Mala Kopašnica; Skobaljić medieval town; House of Bora Dimitrijević Pixels; Museum of Textile Industry in Strojkovac; Shop-Đokić's house; Hydroelectric power plant in Vučje; Hisar Memorial Park and the Round Pavilion of the Leskovac Fair. Descriptions of these cultural and historical attractions are given below.

Holy Trinity Cathedral in Leskovac	Cathedral dedicated to the Holy Trinity. It was built from 1921-1931, when it was consecrated on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on September 21, in the presence of the highest church and state dignitaries (the presence of the king and patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church). It was built in the image of Gracanica.
"Odžaklija" Church of the Holy Mother of God in Leskovac	The church of the chimney was built in 1803 on the foundations of the already existing temple. It differs from other churches in its appearance. It is wide, but low, which is why it looks more like a house than a church. That was the intention of the old builders. Namely, it was built during the Turkish rule, when the conquerors did not look at Orthodox churches with good intentions. The people of Leskovac, since there was no church in the city at that time, went to the temples located in the surrounding villages. In the first years of the 19th century, they managed to get a firman from the sultan, that is, approval to build a church in the city. However, the local Turkish population did not like it. As the story remained among the people, which was noted by numerous authors, the people of Leskovac came up with and predicted a fireplace and a chimney on the building, saying that, in fact, they were not building a church, but a house for a priest. Even after the completion of the construction, and the Turkish rule, the temple was exposed to dangers. Within the church gate, there is also a rarity in the Orthodox world, the only example of a construction project, and that is the old church dedicated to the birth of the Most Holy Mother of God or the Little Lady.
Church of Saint Elijah on Hisar	The Church of St. Elijah is located on the east side of Hisar. It was erected and consecrated on the occasion of marking the five hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, in 1889, on the site, as the legend says, of a medieval place of worship. The church was designed by Svetozar Ivačković, and the iconostasis was made by S. Nikolic from Bitola.
Temple of Saint Simeon the Myrrh-bearer	The temple of Saint Simeon Mirotočivi is located in the town of Dubocica. On the territory of the city of Leskovac, 49 immovable cultural goods are protected, 5 in the category of great importance and 44 cultural monuments in the category of cultural goods. A large number of goods (152 in total) are under previous protection, represented in the form of objects of folk architecture, urban, public, and sacral architecture, archaeological sites ³² . The cultural life of the city of Leskovac takes place in several cultural facilities. The City Reading Room, founded in 1869, grew into the large City Public Library in 1935. After the audit in 2013, the library has a total of 101,400 monographic publications, a total of 2,774 journals and 63 years (626 volumes) of newspapers. The Leskovac Cultural Centre began its activities in 1981, originally as the House of Youth Culture "Zika".
Church of St. Petka in Rudare	Rudare Monastery is located in the village of the same name Rudare, not far from Leskovac, it represents an immovable cultural asset as a cultural monument of great importance.

	<p>The church of the monastery, dedicated to the Venerable Martyr Paraskeva - Holy Friday, is located on a branch of the mountain Kukavica, on Rudarska kosa, which sinks into the wide Leskovac valley in front of the town. It was built on the foundations of an early Christian basilica from the 5th century when the famous Empress' city - Justinian Prima - was built. This basilica was probably destroyed by the invasions of the Slavs in the 6th and 7th centuries, and it underwent its first restoration during the time of Nemanjić. In the Middle Ages, there was a monastery here, which was the spiritual centre of Leskovac and its surroundings during the Turks. The temple was partially damaged in 1814, but was soon rebuilt, when today's stone slabs were placed on the floor. Felix Kanitz, a travel writer, and historian who visited these parts in the 19th century, wrote that this temple "with white walls, a former monastery, a favourite gathering place and a favourite picnic spot for the people of Leskovac." He also stated that at that time, the church was the centre of the parish to which 14 surrounding villages belonged and which has two priests.</p>
<p>Church of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist in Vučje</p>	<p>The Church of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist is located about a kilometre from Vucje, south of Leskovac, on the slopes of Kukavica. It is the work of the famous Russian architect and professor Grigory Samoilov. According to some sources, it was built on the site of a former medieval church, the endowment of Serbian heroes from the Turkish era, Nikola Skobaljić. That church was destroyed by the Turks, but the Serbian people, according to tradition, still gathered on its remains, thus maintaining their faith and spirit during the time of slavery under the Turks. That was one of the motives of the Teokarević family, famous industrialists who developed the textile industry in this part of Serbia during the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, to build a new church on the same place. The building of specific beauty, completed in 1938, is considered by some to be one of the most significant examples of interwar church architecture in our country. The church was consecrated on July 7, 1938, on the feast of the Birth of Saint John the Baptist, which is also the glory of Vucje.</p>
<p>Church of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist in Vučje</p>	<p>The Monastery of the Presentation of the Most Holy Mother of God, which is located not far from the Monastery of St. John the Baptist in Jašunja, is a monastery dedicated to the Presentation of the Most Holy Mother of God. According to the inscription on the portal above the entrance door of the temple, it is written that the temple was built in 1499, by the work of the nun Ksenija, with the sisters Theophanes, Martha and Mary. The construction of the temple was completed on October 11, 1500. As the Turkish authorities banned the construction of new monasteries and churches after 1453, the monastery was most likely built on the foundations of an older one from an unknown period. The Turks severely damaged the monastery, especially during the First and Second Serbian Uprising. It underwent its first renovation in 1863 with the work of Jovan Iljković from Galičnik. The monastery was originally completely picturesque, and partially corrected several times. The narthex was painted in 1868 by the artist Jovan Ilijević. On March 18, 1982, the monastery was placed under the protection of the State, as a cultural monument of great importance.</p>
<p>Church of St. Petka in Kumarevo</p>	<p>The Church of St. Petka in Kumarevo, according to legend, the origin of the village of Kumarevo is related to the construction of the church. Namely, during the invasion of the Turks, the monastery in Slatina was demolished, the Turks hanged twelve kala Đera, and only one survived who was not in the monastery, because he kept sheep by order. He found the icon of St. Petka on the hearth of the monastery, so together with the people he crossed the Morava and placed the icon and the cross on the place where the people later built the church. In fact, it was an improvised church until 1803, when a temple was built of solid material, which was consecrated that same year.</p>

	The temple fell into disrepair, so a magnificent temple was built next to it, in 1933, built in the Moravian style with a dome and a bell tower above the narthex.
Church of St. Nicholas in Čukljenik	The church of the monastery is dedicated to Saint Nicholas, turned into a secular one in 1884, and there used to be a Greek church of the Assumption of the Most Holy Mother of God. There are no reliable data on the origin and past of the monastery, but the monastery is certainly older than the village, which was formed next to it only after the First Serbian Uprising. The Čukljenik Monastery is located in the village of the same name, Čukljenik, of the Archdiocese of the First Leskovac Diocese of Niš. It is not known when it was built in this area, but most likely in the Middle Ages, and today in the 20th century. Due to the historical and ambient values of the whole, it represents an immovable cultural good as a cultural monument of great importance.
Jašunja monasteries	The monastery of St. John in the village of Jasunja is located on the slopes of Babicka gora, about fifteen kilometres from Leskovac. It was built in 1517. On the foundations, it is believed, are three hundred years old shrines. Like most monasteries and churches, it was the centre of literacy, church, and spiritual life of this part of the Diocese of Nis during the Ottoman Empire. Haran has been restored several times, but thanks to the efforts of benefactors, it was quickly restored. It is believed that the fresco painting of the monastery church was created on several occasions. The oldest frescoes were painted in 1524, and in 1584 the western facade of the church was painted. The sanctuary is unique in its frescoes depicting scenes from the Old and New Testaments, in the entire outer facade of the church, of which, unfortunately, only fragments can be seen today.
Monastery of the Presentation of the Most Holy Mother of God	The Monastery of the Presentation of the Most Holy Mother of God, which is located not far from the Monastery of St. John the Baptist in Jašunja, is a monastery dedicated to the Presentation of the Most Holy Mother of God. According to the inscription on the portal above the entrance door of the temple, it is written that the temple was built in 1499, by the work of the nun Ksenija, with the sisters Theophanes, Martha and Mary. The construction of the temple was completed on October 11, 1500. As the Turkish authorities banned the construction of new monasteries and churches after 1453, the monastery was most likely built on the foundations of an older one from an unknown period. The Turks severely damaged the monastery, especially during the First and Second Serbian Uprising. It underwent its first renovation in 1863 with the work of Jovan Iljković from Galičnik. The monastery was originally completely picturesque, and partially corrected several times. The narthex was painted in 1868 by the artist Jovan Iljević. On March 18, 1982, the monastery was placed under the protection of the State, as a cultural monument of great importance.
Hisar Memorial Park	The memorial park is a memorial park, located on the eastern slope of the Hisar hill. The complex was built in 1971, and its author is the architect Bogdan Bogdanović. It is dedicated to the fighters of the NOVJ and the victims of fascism from this area who died during the Second World War. The memorial park consists of three basic units: a ceremonial road, a space with cenotaphs / stećak tombstones and a symbolic conical sculpture that rises above the amphitheatre. From 2009, the memorial park includes a lapidary of about 20 Jewish tombstones, collected in the vicinity. Namely, until the Second World War, there was a small Jewish cemetery nearby, which was then destroyed by the Nazis.
Rudare Monastery	The Church of St. Petka in Rudar is the oldest church in the Leskovac area, otherwise the Byzantine basilica, it was destroyed in the Ottoman invasion, and it was rebuilt again. In that period, a monastery was founded around it. In the Austro-Turkish War, at the beginning of the 18th century, it was destroyed again. It was rebuilt in 1799. It is characterized by magnificent frescoes. There are two layers.

	The first layer is from the Middle Ages, and the second was painted after the renovation of the temple in 1815. Next to the temple, there is a boarding house with a two-storey building built at the beginning of the 19th century. It is a true architectural masterpiece of its time.
Ethno-archaeological park on Hisar	Hisar is of exceptional importance for the history of the town of Leskovac, where the remains of settlements from the Neolithic, Copper, Bronze, and Iron Ages, as well as from the Roman, Byzantine, and Turkish periods have been found. The remains of the oldest settlements date from the Middle and Late Neolithic. Hisar was inhabited during all periods of the Metal Age, Copper Middle Bronze Age, and Iron Age. Remains of fortifications from the late ancient period - IV century and early Byzantine period - VI century, as well as the Serbian Middle Ages and the Turkish period have been discovered. In addition to settlements and fortifications, parts of necropolises from the early Byzantine period and the Serbian Middle Ages were discovered - XII-XIII century. The oldest centre of ferrous metallurgy in Europe was discovered on Hisar, a multi-layered settlement of the Brnjica cultural group from 1300 BC was found, the most beautiful examples of medieval glass in several colors, remains of a settlement from 1400, silver coins of Stefan Lazarevic, traces of frescoes from XII and XIII centuries. In 2002, an invaluable needle-shaped object 64.5 cm long made of pure stainless iron, dating from 1300 BC, was discovered on Hisar, made using hitherto unknown technology. This miraculous "needle" is kept in the Archaeological Institute in Belgrade.
Gradac site	The Gradac site is located near the village of Zlokućana near Leskovac. It is located above the mouth of the Jašunjska river along the South Morava. Due to its natural position, the hill served as a base for raising settlements on the widest flat plateau, which has a slight slope to the northwest. The material found here belongs to the Vinča-Pavement phase (young Neolithic) with an abundance of elements from the Early Bronze Age of the South.
Roman necropolis in the village of Mala Kopašnica	The Roman necropolis with the graves of the burnt dead is located in the village of Mala Kopašnica. The necropolis belonged to a settlement that lived in the II and in the first years of the III century. Luxurious grave finds speak of the great wealth of the settlement. Bronze coins, ceramic dishes, jewellery made of glass paste and gold, weapons, tools, etc. were found in all the graves. Gold jewellery indicates a very developed handicraft of this area during the Roman Empire. It is assumed that this settlement was devastated in the sixth century AD.
Skobaljić medieval town	The archaeological site Skobaljić grad is located on the top of the ridge of the mountain Kukavica, about ten kilometres southwest of Vučje. The site is multi-layered because there are traces from different epochs. The oldest traces date back to the Copper and Bronze Ages. The oldest stone fortification was built in pre-Roman times, and the fortification is made of stone, brick, and mortar from the early Byzantine era. The youngest fortification, whose remains - ramparts and towers, are now visible on the ground, dates from the 15th century and is associated with the person of Nikola Skobaljić, the lord of the despot Đurđe Branković. Nikola Skobaljić is a historical figure who is mentioned in connection with the two battles he fought in September and November 1454. The city consists of Upper, Lower City and Suburbs and covers an area of about two hectares. Archaeological excavations were carried out in the period from 1984 to 1990.
House of Bora Dimitrijević Piksle	The house of Bora Dimitrijević Piksle, the old building of the National Museum, was built in the 19th century. One-storey building, made in the Balkan style. Today, this building houses a permanent ethnological exhibition of the National Museum, which depicts the interior of houses in Leskovac during the 19th century.

Museum of Textile Industry in Strojkovac	In the village of Strojkovce near Leskovac, there is the first textile museum, which is located in an old mill. Of special value is the braid, a factory for making decorative braids on old Serbian costumes, whose machines were powered by a mill before the discovery of electricity.
Shop Đokić's house	Shop-Đokić's house is 120 years old. It is a one-storey building with a porch above the entrance. The ground floor of the building is almost without openings, and half of it is occupied by the basement. The floor of this house was beautifully decorated, with a wood-carved ceiling in the largest room. The building was renovated and extended in the same style in 1980.
Hydroelectric power plant Vučje	Hydroelectric power plant Vučje on the river Vučjanka, in Vučje, 17 km from Leskovac. It was built in 1903 and is the second oldest hydroelectric power plant in Serbia and the Balkans. The most deserving for its construction is Professor Djordje Stanojevic, a personal friend of Nikola Tesla and the ancestor of electrification in the Kingdom of Serbia. It belongs to the derivation type of power plant with water intake, water supply chamber, derivation channel and pipeline. It is a curiosity in itself. It is about 1000 meters long, with an average width and depth of 1 meter. On one side it is carved into the rock, and on the other a retaining wall is built. The natural beauty of the canal is not disturbed by the construction, moreover, from its edges there is a beautiful view of waterfalls, stone cliffs, and the canyon of the river Vucjanka. Most of the other parts of the power plant complex were built during 1903. The oldest transmission line in Serbia, 17 kilometres long, connected the hydroelectric power plant and the city of Leskovac, with which the owners of the power plant had a contract on lighting. On December 24, 1903, the first electric current originated.
Round pavilion of the Leskovac Fair	The round pavilion of the Textile Fair in Leskovac is the most monumental within the complex of exhibition halls. It occupies 2640 m ² of floor space. The base is approximately circular in shape with a mean diameter of about 65 m. It is covered with a suspended roof, which rests on two concrete hyperbolic paraboloids and a network of cables between them. The hall was used for exhibiting textiles, textile products and machines. The pavilion was designed in the office of the Construction Company "RAD" from Belgrade, and the architect was Stjepan Zaležak. Construction began in late May 1958. In the first phase, a gallery of the hall was built without the main construction. The hall was in use for the fair that was held that year, and then instead of a roof, it had a temporary tent canvas. It was finally completed in 1959 ⁷ .

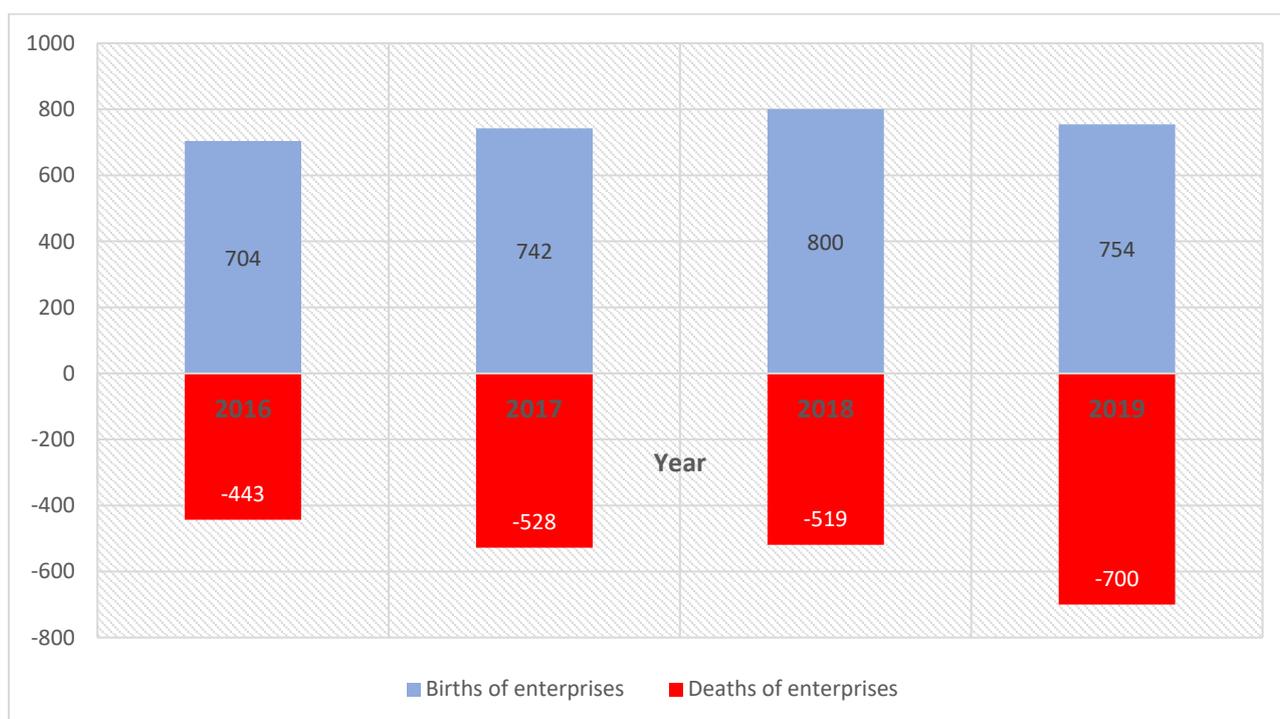
Economy and infrastructure: According to the level of development of local self-government units, the city of Leskovac belongs to the III group of local self-government units whose level of development ranges from 60% to 80% of the national average⁸. On the territory of the city of Leskovac, according to the city planning documents, ten business zones are envisaged, of which the business zone called "Green Zone" is the most famous. It is a new industrial zone owned by the city of Leskovac, with an area of 971,500 m², formed in order to provide new investments. The M1 highway divides the Zone into two parts. The western part of the Zone has an area of 427,736 m² and is fully equipped with infrastructure. The highway (Corridor X) passes through the territory of the city of Leskovac and Leskovac has direct access to the E-75 highway. The M-9 highway is a connection with Bulgaria. Railway lines have direct access to the branch of Corridor X E-85 (Salzburg-Belgrade-Leskovac-Skopje-Thessaloniki). The river port of Belgrade is 272 km away. The nearest airport is Constantine the Great Airport in Nis. The city of Leskovac belongs to the group of 25 urbanized cities / municipalities and stands out for its specific position, because along with Nis and Vranje it is located in the southern part of the international traffic corridor 10. As for parking, Leskovac has 1315 parking spaces, of which 539 are in the first zone, 706 in the second zone and 70 parking lots have no time limit.

⁷ Source: Do.co.mo.mo. Serbia <http://www.docomomo-serbia.org/en/>

⁸ Source: Уредба о утврђивању јединствене листе развијености региона и јединица локалне самоуправе за 2014 ("Сл. гласник РС", бр. 104/2014).

With this number of parking spaces, the city of Leskovac barely satisfies the needs of drivers, given the increased number of vehicles in urban areas. Taxi service in the city of Leskovac has 267 vehicles⁹. Leskovac and the surrounding settlements are supplied with water from the "Barje" reservoir, which was created by the damming of the river Veternica, 30 km upstream from Leskovac through the main water supply in the length of 87 km. Leskovac has a plant (factory) for wastewater treatment located near the settlement of Bogojevce, at the confluence of the river Veternica and South Morava. The factory is designed for 86,000 inhabitants and after receiving wastewater from the city's power collector, it can process 800 liters of wastewater per second¹⁰. JKP Toplana is in charge of the production and distribution of thermal energy for heating, as well as for heating and gasification of the city. The main branch of the main gas pipeline MG 11 passes through Leskovac. Internet connection and mobile telephony signals are good. Leskovac has a long entrepreneurial tradition and a very developed sector of small and medium enterprises. Business demographics have a positive trend. According to the existing data (chart below), the ratio of newly established economic entities and the number of extinguished ones is in favour of newly established economic entities.

Graph 2 City of Leskovac - Business demography (number of enterprises)



Leskovac is a city with a developed textile, chemical, wood processing and food industry, but also a centre of barbecue and culinary specialties. According to the database of business entities PKS Partner (www.pkspartner.rs), the structure of the economy is as follows: Agriculture, forestry and fishing 1.31%, Production 19.71%, Electricity, gas, steam supply 0.16%, Water supply; wastewater management, 0.41%, Construction 8.99%, Wholesale and retail trade 24.52%, Traffic and storage 6.80%, Accommodation and food services 5.72%, Information and communication 3.01 %, Financial and insurance activities 0.84%, Real estate 0.49%, Professional, scientific, innovation and technical activities 7.66%, Administrative and support service activities 3.28%. In the structure of the economy, education participates in the same percentage as health and social protection, with 1.11%. The arts of entertainment and recreation participate with 1.99%, while there is a large percentage of so-called other service activities 12.80%. According to the data of the Serbian Business Registers Agency (SBRA), in the business year 2018, 1,070 active legal entities (companies and cooperatives) and 4,001 active entrepreneurs operated on the territory of the city of Leskovac.

⁹ Source: Програма развоја туризма града Лесковца 2020-2025. године

¹⁰ Source: Програма развоја туризма града Лесковца 2020-2025. године

The Department of Economy and Agriculture of the City Administration of the City of Leskovac - Department of Economy and Entrepreneurship prepares the Analysis of Business Results and SMEs of the City of Leskovac on the basis of financial reports for companies, cooperatives and entrepreneurs for local government submitted by SBRA. Data for 863 legal entities and 782 entrepreneurs based in the territory of the city of Leskovac were submitted to this Department for the business year 2018. Leskovac has an exceptional tradition in the development of agriculture and, above all, vegetables. Agricultural land, terrain configuration, favourable climatic and hydrological conditions represent a great comparative advantage of the city of Leskovac. Agricultural production is mostly of the individual type and is characterized by the fragmentation of plots. The city of Leskovac has 58,970 ha of agricultural land, of which meadows and pastures occupy a total of 11,870 ha, and the rest are arable land, orchards, and vineyards. 30,375 ha are under forests, i.e., about 30% of the total territory of the city, of which 39.92% is in state ownership and 60.08% in private ownership. Irrigation possibilities are great, but unused (intensively irrigated less than 5% of the total area). Unused (neglected) land can be used for organic production, which is important for the tourist offer. The development of agriculture and the development of rural tourism are complementary goals. The expansion of the market is important for the development of agriculture, and the development of rural tourism is the most suitable way of that expansion.

Tourism: The tourist infrastructure in the city of Leskovac is developed. According to the available data from the databases of business entities PKS Partner, 347 business entities provide catering and tourist services in the city. According to the data from October 2020, 35 business entities provided travel organization services. Accommodation is provided in hotels and resorts for short stays. A total of 24 such facilities were registered. Catering services are provided in 270 facilities, including 233 restaurants, 7 fast food restaurants, 25 cafes and bars, 3 pastry shops and 3 wineries. Entertainment and recreational activities are performed by 18 business entities. Data from February 2020 show that there has been a reduction in the number of businesses that provide catering and tourism services in the city by 10%. The reduction in the number of economic entities is a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, i.e., the applied measures to limit the gathering of people in order to prevent the spread of the disease. According to official statistics, over 1000 people work in the field of catering and tourism in Leskovac, i.e., 3.20% of the total number of employees¹¹. The structure of accommodation facilities, i.e., their capacities, has changed in the last few years. According to the data of the ministry in charge of tourism from December 2020, the number of categorized accommodation facilities (hotels, motels, boarding houses, tourist, and apartment settlements (excluding private houses, rooms, rural tourist households, hunting villas and camps)) was 6. In these facilities there are 13 suites, 149 rooms and 252 beds¹². Compared to the previous announcement of the Ministry of Tourism (August 2020), the number of categorized facilities was reduced by 1, and the number of beds by 7.54%¹³. According to the Department of Economy and Agriculture of the City of Leskovac¹⁴ - Department for Local - Sustainable Development in Leskovac is eleven categorized facilities for individuals, with a total of 73 beds and 16 facilities for legal entities persons with a total of 460 beds¹⁵. In 2019, a total of 24,280 tourist arrivals were registered, which is an increase of 26.57% in compared to 2015. The average annual growth rate of the total number of tourist arrivals compared to 2015 is 5.31%. The realized number of overnight stays of all tourists who used accommodation capacities was 45,178 and was higher by 45.49% compared to 2015. In the period from 2015 to 2019, Leskovac continuously records an increase in the number of tourists. However, the number of realized nights per tourist is extremely low and for the period 2015-2018 it is only 1.59. The average tourist in Leskovac spends 25 EUR per night per person, between 10 and 15 EUR for food, 10 EUR per person for refreshments and coffee, while between 2 and 3 EUR for souvenirs. Collectively, the consumption of tourists per day is from 30 to 50 EUR. It is characteristic for the destination Leskovac that 64% of tourist consumption goes to accommodation and food services, while outside boarding house consumption is incomparably lower only 16%.

¹¹ Source: Републички завод за статистику. Општине и региони у Републици Србији, 2019.

¹² Source: Categorized objects in Serbia – December 2020 <https://mtt.gov.rs/download/Spisak%20hoteli,%20decembar.xlsx>

¹³ Source: Categorized objects in Serbia – August 2020 <https://mtt.gov.rs/download/Avgust.xls>

¹⁴ The Department of Economy and Agriculture of the City of Leskovac is responsible for the categorization of facilities of natural and legal persons in domestic handicrafts (rooms, houses, apartments) and rural tourist household

¹⁵ Source: Програм развоја туризма града Лесковца 2020-2025. године

Festival and cultural tourism with the spice of local gastronomy is experiencing expansion. Leskovac has recognized the potential in the development of cultural tourism and with its support to numerous cultural events of national and international importance contributes to the development of this type of tourism. Leskovac has a long and rich sports tradition in the development of sports and recreational events. Special potential in this area is represented by the Sports and Recreation Centre "Dubocica", which offers users a large hall with a capacity of over 3600 seats and a small hall, bowling alley, shooting range, large Olympic pool with two smaller pools, which trains non-swimmers, 6 tennis courts, and Fairgrounds Hall (Blue Pavilion). Sports and recreation centre Dubocica offers its customers a large (capacity over 3600 seats) and a small hall, bowling alley and swimming pool of Olympic size. Leskovac has 2 football stadiums, Dubocica and Sloga, as well as an excellent trotting track for the development of equestrian sports. Gastronomy is one of the basic factors of destination attractiveness. Leskovac is most famous for the Leskovac barbecue, which is made from a special meat grill, whose original recipe has not left the city to this day. The gastronomic festival Leskovac Barbecue Week (Rostilijada) has been confirmed as one of the main culinary events in Southeast Europe, with over half a million visitors, mostly young people from the cross-border area. It is accompanied by a rich cultural program - concerts, fashion shows, carnivals, and competitions. The peculiarity of the festival is the preparation of the largest burger in the world for the Guinness record. During this event, the tourism sector recorded a 45% increase in revenue. During the year, 35 manifestations and celebrations are organized. They are the main tourist attractions of the area.

Table 5 Leskovac -List of cultural events

1. Leskovac Barbecue Festival (Serbian Роштиљијада)	18. Leskovac festival of street theatre
2. Balkan Festival of Young Cartoonists	19. Leskovac festival of Traditional Art
3. Bladed weapons through the ages	20. Leskovac Souvenir Exhibition
4. The culinary manifestation "Leskovački ajvar"	21. Leskovac Summer
5. Cooking event "Leskovačka Mučkalica"	22. LIFFE-Leskovac International Film Festival
6. Days of cherries in the village of Lipovica	23. May Art Salon
7. Days of Nikolaj Timcenko	24. Museum Night in Leskovac
8. FAPOR -Festival of Amateur Theater Director	25. Nikola Skobaljić event in Vučje
9. Farmer days in the village of Nomanica	26. Pear Days in Vučje
10. Grdelica Summer and Grdelica Regatta	27. Pepper days in the village of Lokosnica
11. Honey days in Leskovac	28. Pihitijada in the village of Grabovnica
12. International Guitar Festival	29. Potato days in the village of Pecenjevc
13. LEDAMUS-Leskovac Days of Music	30. Regional exhibition of cows and heifers in Leskovac
14. Art Colony Vlasina	31. Strawberry days in the village of Dusanovo
15. Leskovac Carnival	32. STRINGS International Festival and Summer Academy of Music
16. Leskovac Drum Dum Fest	33. The Night of Good Photography
17. Leskovac festival of Child Creativity	34. Think Tank Town festival
	35. Watermill Days in Vucje

In addition to barbecue, Leskovac is known for "Leskovac" peppers and Leskovac ajvar and for the famous "Leskovac mučkalica". Leskovačka mučkalica is an authentic dish from the Leskovac region that is prepared from grilled meat and vegetables. Leskovac with its range of traditional products such as the famous barbecue, ajvar, asparagus, Leskovac shaker, Williams Pear Brandy, etc., is an attractive destination for the consumption of authentic dishes and drinks in many restaurants and tourist facilities. A special potential in this area is the development of tourism, which relies on attending various multi-day cooking schools in which participants are introduced to the basic characteristics and methods of preparing meals from the Leskovac region. An overview and description of significant tourist events that are organized within the tourist destination Leskovac are shown below. The authors of the text of the description and the owners of the photos placed below the description are the organizers, which are listed in the table. The authors have consented to the publication of these photographs. The project partners express great gratitude for the submitted descriptions and photos.

Descriptions of tourist manifestation - Leskovac

The name of manifestation:	Leskovac Barbecue Festival (Serbian Roštiljijada)
Place:	Leskovac
Time:	The end of August
Organizer:	Tourist organization of Leskovac City of Leskovac
Internet portal:	https://tol.rs/
Visitors:	Visitors from Serbia, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Greece

Manifestation description

Leskovac Barbecue Festival (Rostiljijada) has long been the holy capital of barbecue, the metropolis of good fun and a place where culinary masters meet for years, caterers compete, soul-stirring sounds mix, and everything for visitors to have fun, businessmen to meet, to encourage serenity and excitement, to master joy. The tradition of barbecue in the Leskovac area has lasted for several centuries. The barbecue arrived in Serbia via the Caucasus, Turkey, Greece, and Macedonia, and because of the "improvement" and today's quality, it rightly carried the epithet of Serbian, and above all Leskovac specialty. Kebabs were first mentioned in the 18th century. Although it is adopted by all Balkan nations, although the ways of preparation and tastes differ, everyone agrees that Leskovac is a city with the longest and richest tradition of barbecue and that the people of Leskovac are top masters. This is confirmed by prestigious awards from the country and the world. The name Miodrag Gligorijević - Dragi Bure, which, following the family tradition, reached the most prestigious international awards, is written in large letters in the annals of good food. The so-called "close company", they could not imagine the beauty of the pub socializing without a cold chimney and generous ovals with a barbecue. Evening outings were marked by "small and large trains", longer and shorter compositions composed of grilled specialties: burgers, kebabs, veshalitsa, skewers, bacon, donuts, and what not. And as an addition, there was always a hot couple, finely chopped onion and, for those more daring gourmets, grated paprika. In order to affirm the tradition of barbecue, enterprising tourist representatives, together with famous caterers, started the Barbecue Festival in 1989, as a local fair of catering specifics. Today, Rostiljijada is a modern designed and well-organized festival of kebab craftsmanship, professional lectures, competitions, and good fun. During the week of the event, guests are offered a rich program of concerts by cultural and artistic societies, rock groups, performers of selected folk and popular music. The barbecue is followed by competitions in making barbecues, and the biggest attention is attracted by the competitions for the largest burger in the world and the largest burger from the hand. The barbecue is held every year on the week in which August and September meet. Under the open sky in the centre of the city, on the popular Široka čaršija, stands have been set up, in front of which smoke "grills" with hot charcoal. The smell of baked kebabs, burgers, donuts, skewers, sausages, bacon, liver, and other specialties for which Leskovac is widely known spreads from them. In front of the stands is a promenade that several hundred thousand people pass through during the event. **BIG BURGER-** It is not easy to imagine a burger that has between 50 and 60 kilograms of grilled meat in it, and it is even harder to make this creation. It is a world record in size, which skilled masters break from year to year. This edible, gigantic creation, over a meter and a half in diameter, three centimetres thick, captures the attention of the world media. Pictures from the competition toured many meridians, and the very moment of turning the burger raises the adrenaline of the observer as the most attractive stunts of acrobats on the trapeze. This competition is monitored by an expert commission composed of distinguished culinary professors, who consider the quantity and quality of meat, the shape and dimensions of the burger, the compactness of the mass and, in particular, the taste of the final product.

Burger from the hand is another competitive specialty that attracts attention and deserves admiration. Imagine a master who mixes over 3 kilograms of meat on his fists and shapes it all into a burger, throws it on the grill and bakes it. The same rules apply to the big one as well as to this one. The first winner of these competitions was Novica Stanković Šaponja. Unfortunately, this excellent kebab maker was born in 1999 in Kosovo, so this competition, in his honour, takes place under his name. In addition to these competitions, there is a competition of barbecue masters called "Miodrag Gligorijevic - Dragi Bure" and a competition of students from catering schools in Serbia. The barbecue is a manifestation of fun, good mood, and good music. From the early afternoons to the early mornings, the trumpets of the top masters of the chokes resound. From 8 pm until midnight, top sheet metal orchestras, rock bands, performers of popular folk and popular music, top singers and orchestras, pop stars take turns on the big stage. Barbecues. Several thousand visitors enjoyed the concerts of the YU group, Kerber, Galija, Tropiko and Amadeus band, the band Hari Mata-Hari, Crvena jabuka, Frajli, Miroslav Ilić. Luisa, Ana Bekuta, Snezana Djuriscic, Boki Milosevic, Biljana Krstic and Bistriki, and folklore groups from Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Slovenia. Exhibitions of works of art and documents are held during the Barbecue Festival. The tourist organization also organizes an art colony where artists paint motifs from the colourful and visually rich Barbecue.

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:	Carnival Leskovac
Place:	Leskovac
Time:	First week of July
Organizer:	Tourist organization of Leskovac City of Leskovac
Internet portal:	https://tol.rs/
Visitors:	Visitors from Serbia and the whole region
Manifestation description	
<p>CARNIVAL - history of tradition. The idea to design the carnival was found in the discreet intention to move the charm of carnival parties to the streets of the city and make them look like distant Rio, the Mediterranean, masquerades, the beauty of spacious squares with jugglers, fire eaters, miracles, magicians, guardians of tradition. Then we peeked into the native history and customs of the south of Serbia. There were calendars, dodols, lazars and queens, which inspired the ancestors to organize several carnivals to remember in the 1920s and 1930s. Then, in 2006, the Carnival was added to the Barbecue as a lavish medallion. The second carnival was interrupted due to the large number of spectators, which numbered over 50,000 that evening, because the procession could not make its way to the main stage. With the fourth carnival, Leskovac Carnival, we became members of the FECC. The route was changed, Carnival was profiled into a special six-day event to which were added: Third Age Carnival, Children's Carnival, Big Masquerade, Carnival Games on Water, Eco Carnival, Carnival of tattoo, Face & Body Painting, pets, fire festivals, majorette's street entertainers and jugglers, old-timers ... Then, there are the Carnival Colony, drawing carnivals on the sidewalk, mask-making workshops, barrel races, carnival concerts and exhibitions. Over two thousand participants and a huge number of spectators make Leskovac look like a big tourist capital in those days. Fifty attractive groups from more than ten countries and from Serbia, with nearly two thousand participants, parade along the main Leskovac Boulevard every carnival Saturday from 9 pm. Several tens of thousands of Leskovac citizens and their guests from the country and abroad greet the participants who, with their colourful masks, choreographies, allegorical vehicles, juggling songs and other carnival curiosities, pass through the line of observers and show three-minute programs at two points. Leskovac is one of the most prominent members of the Federation of European Carnival Cities. He can boast that, in addition to numerous groups, he also hosted respected members of the diplomatic corps, the most prominent representatives of carnival cities, distinguished guests from the country and abroad, cultural, and public workers, businessmen, artists. Carnival is a holiday of joy, variety, serenity, fun and youth. That is why it begins with a carnival round and, like any serious event, the anthem of the FECC and the Leskovac Carnival, and ends with a big firework display and a carnival ball under masks. Carnival days, which are an overture to the big carnival, warming up the atmosphere, have Face & Body Painting and Fire Festival as candles on the cake. It is a multi-hour program that begins with painting the face and body. Following is the reconstruction of the carnival customs of this area, which is characterized by skipping the "caravan". The program continues with songs by skilled jugglers and fire-eaters who come to us from several cities in Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania ... After their breath-taking songs, a mini fireworks display is organized as an introduction to the great Carnival fireworks. It is an illumination program - sprinkler, wire, firecrackers, confetti. In the end, messages of love, tenderness, friendship are written and played in small lanterns - which are other names for the motto of the Leskovac Carnival. The children's carnival envelops the noble idea of Carnival with jewels. It is traditionally preceded by the great Masquerade. Hundreds of costumed boys and girls walked through the carnival plateau that evening with masks that their inspired parents conceived and realized. The organizer richly rewards the best masked children and reciprocates them for the beauty that they scatter on the sidewalk of the city Boulevard on that occasion. It seems that even greater joy is prepared by children from dance schools, kindergartens, primary schools, clubs for children with special needs ... They, with their educators and mentors, organize carnival groups of small participants and organize memory programs, which they would be proud of. the world's most prestigious carnivals. The organizer presents diplomas, medals, and plaques to the best children's carnival groups in the hope that the children's excitement, cheerfulness and carefreeness will move into the spirit of their Carnival.</p>	

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:	Leskovac International Film Festival - LIFFE
Place:	Leskovac
Time:	The third week of September
Organizer:	Leskovac Cultural Centre
Internet portal:	https://liffe.rs/
Visitors:	Audiences of different ages, education, and interests; Filmmakers (directors, actors, students of directing ...)

Manifestation description

The Leskovac International Film Directing Festival was launched in 2008 with the aim of promoting film achievements and authors from the country and the region. During its thirteen-year history, organized by the Leskovac Cultural Centre, it has developed into a prestigious event that goes far beyond the local framework and is growing in popularity among film lovers and filmmakers. The most valuable achievements from the region are presented at the festival, and so far, more than 250 films have been shown in front of about 80,000 spectators. In addition, LIFFE had a large number of world and European premieres in Serbia, and cult authors of ex-Yugoslav cinematography came to the festival. The International Film Directing Festival in Leskovac was founded with the idea of networking the region. The cinematographers of this region, in addition to their specifics, speak a universal language that is best understood by neighbours with a similar mentality and sensibility. In addition to the cultural diversity that this festival offers and the development of local recognition of authors and actors, it also provides the opportunity to meet filmmakers, which is the basis for creating a better and more diverse market. For thirteen years, the festival has hosted over 90 of the most famous directors of different generations, as well as a large number of actors from the region. The Grand Prix of the festival is named after the celebrated filmmaker Zivojin Zika Pavlovic. Two more awards for directing and two acting awards are given at the festival. Every year, LIFFE strives to offer a faithful spectator and guests a wide range of film and other program content through the main and accompanying program units. A special competition program consists of films by students of directing from Serbia and the former Yugoslav region, who compete equally

with their films for the Radomir Bajo Šaranović Award - the most successful young director. This program provides an opportunity for non-established authors to present themselves and their initial film achievements to the festival audience and the expert jury that evaluates the student film. The curiosity of the festival is the main competition program that unites film productions made in Serbia and the region in the period between the two LIFFE festivals. Within this part of the Main Program, directors of feature films from the country and the region present their achievements. The competition program is composed of films carefully selected by the Festival Selector, and the condition is that the films come from one of the former Yugoslav republics or are co-produced, as well as be recognizable in terms of expression and subject matter - The festival is recognizable by the rich and diverse content of the accompanying program, which consists of the promotion of books, forums and conversations with famous actors and directors, exhibitions and concerts of music stars of the region, as well as various educational programs. Great importance is given to the festival by the traditional conference of directors and producers, which seeks to find new models of cooperation and networking of production and distribution of films in the countries of the region. The unique platform enables easier cooperation of film professionals and helps the development of the value chain of film production and contributes to the increase of the market and thus better-quality production of new film productions. The festival concept of LIFFE is based on the affirmation of authors and their achievements from the former Yugoslav republics, it puts directing in the foreground - art, i.e., a craft that everyone knows everything about, and which is still in the deep shadow and classifies this festival as one of the important manifestations in Serbia and the region.

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:	Paprika Days – Donja Lakošnica
Place:	Donja Lakošnica village, City of Leskovac
Time:	September
Organizer:	City of Leskovac - Budget fund for the development of agriculture in the city of Leskovac
Internet portal:	https://www.gradleskovac.org
Visitors:	Local Community Donja Lokošnica, O. Sh. "Vuk Karadžić", Agricultural Advisory Professional Service - Leskovac, Folklore Section of the House of Culture Pečenjevce, Cultural Art Society "Lemind"

Manifestation description

Fourteen kilometres northeast of Leskovac, on the right bank of the South Morava is the village of Donja Lokošnica. The city of Leskovac, every year in September, organizes the traditional manifestation "Days of Paprika", which sends the most beautiful picture of the Leskovac region to the world. Donja Lokošnica is a kind of pepper kingdom. The paprika that is grown is an autochthonous variety that thrives best in this area and is mainly used for the production of spicy paprika (ground and grated paprika). Donja Lokošnica is known and unique for the facades of houses decorated with numerous rows of red peppers, which are dried naturally. This is an attraction for many tourists who visit this unique village on the way and paint authentic facades of houses and outbuildings. The inhabitants of this village are the guardians of tradition. Until 2019, 14 manifestations "Days of Pepper" were held. Unfortunately, in 2020, this event was not held to prevent the spread of the infectious disease COVID-19 caused by the SARS-Co V virus. This event aims to: promote the development potential of the village; promotion of agricultural products and placement. About 30 red pepper exhibitors take part in the event every year. "Pepper Days" gather a large number of residents of Donja Lokošnica, surrounding villages, as well as visitors from all over Serbia. The interest of media representatives is significant and growing from year to year. At the very beginning of the event, interested agricultural producers follow the lectures of the advisors of the Agricultural Advisory Expert Service of the city of Leskovac, on current topics mainly related to the production and protection of peppers in the protected area, as well as outdoors. A cultural and artistic program is also required. Every year, local cultural and artistic societies take part in the event. Participants are both locals and students of the Elementary School "Vuk Karadzic" from Donja Lokosnica. At the beginning of the cultural and artistic program, the participants and visitors of the event are addressed by the mayor / deputy mayor of the city of Leskovac and the president of the local community. As part of the cultural and artistic program, a competition in quick paprika sorting is regularly organized. About ten representatives, mostly women, residents of the village of Donja Lokošnica, usually participate in this competition. They are very skilled and fast in the process of stringing peppers and making wreaths, because they are also in charge of that part of the process of drying peppers in their farms. Symbolic prizes are provided for all participants in the competition, with the winner of the competition, the second-placed and the third-placed, receiving prizes of slightly higher value. The exhibited paprika, which is richly stacked and nicely arranged in carriages and traditional packaging, is visited, and evaluated by an expert commission. The criteria for evaluating paprika are organoleptic properties, physical appearance, and technological quality of the wig. Prizes for the most beautiful and highest quality paprika are provided for the first-placed and second-placed exhibitor. For all visitors to the event who are engaged in agricultural production and have registered agricultural farms, a prize game of chance is organized, where prizes are publicly drawn from the drum. A special charm to the draw is given by the youngest locals dressed in traditional folk costumes of our region, who are otherwise in charge of drawing the winners. The manifestation "Days of Paprika" in Donja Lokošnica is a kind of advertisement for this place, production, and processing of red, spicy paprika, as well as for the entire Leskovac region. The image of this village in the period of houses decorated with red wreaths of paprika arouses great interest of domestic and foreign visitors. Thus, in the fall of 2020, although this event was not held, the German national television company ZDF recorded a show about this unique village in the south of Serbia.

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:	Leskovac Summer Festivalx
Place:	Leskovac
Time:	Mid of June
Organizer:	Tourist organization of Leskovac City of Leskovac
Internet portal:	https://tol.rs/
Visitors:	Native visitors from Serbia

Manifestation description

LESKOVAC SUMMER (LESKOVAC SUMMER FESTIVALS) Started twenty years ago with the idea to create empty and boring summer days, "Leskovac Summer" has become a prestigious cultural event. In one period, it was the longest manifestation in Serbia, with a program of over 5 hours a day. Memories of the work include the visits of academician Matija Bečković, poet Duško Trifunović, actors Miodrag Radovanović, Mišo Janketić, Sonja Savić, Milenko Zablacanski, Tanja Bošković, Ljiljana Blagojević, Gorica Popović, Nebojša Dugalić, Snežana Savić, Svetlana Stanić Boj, Bode Ninković, Lepomir Ivković, Nikola Đurička, Vojin Četković, Katarina Radivojević, Ljiljana Stjepanović, and others. To this list should be added the ensembles "Wandering Hearts" and "From Time to Time", "Creative Band", "Zana", "Tropico Band", "Legends", "Garavi Sokak", "Orthodox Celts", "Unfaithful Babies"... And then Neša Galija, Tijana Dapčević, brothers Teofilović, Gale and Najda, Jovan Maljoković, Dejan Cukić and many others. Concerts of classical music, classical and modern ballet are also remembered. Special mention should be made of the Vidovdas evenings that took place in the churchyard. First, the program dedicated to the battle of Kosovo and Kosovo's heroes took place in the gate of the Cathedral in Leskovac, and in the last few years it has been held in the gate of the church in Rudar. The Vidovdan program is dedicated to significant anniversaries from the rich history of the Serbian people. Actors Miša Janketić performed the programs on these evenings. Mirko Babić, Lepomir Ivković, Nebojša Kundačina, Mirjana Vukojčić, Ivana Žigon, Nebojša Dugalić ... and musicians Vojka Đorđević, Snežana Spasić, Svetlana Stević, as well as actors and musicians from Leskovac and the surrounding area. Leskovac summer is followed by tournaments in indoor soccer and street basketball, fashion shows, exhibitions of paintings, handicrafts, flowers, birds, and dog shows of all

breeds. Although dozens of places in Serbia organize summer programs according to a similar concept, they are a kind of supplement to the tourist and cultural offer for the local population, which remains in the city. In previous years, the event consisted of numerous individually independent programs, with a special emphasis on the entertainment component. The event lasts 15-17 days. All programs are realized in the open, in an attractive space of the ethno-complex Shop-Đokić. All programs are free for visitors. Depending on the quality of the program and the duration, the event is attended by 20,000 - 30,000 visitors. During 2011-2013, an experiment with a new concept showed that a different approach is justified and desirable and at the same time showed great potential of participants. It is envisaged that this event will unite three arts, visual, stage and music, and be reorganized through several different and independent festivals, some of which would have a competitive character. In a couple of years, new cultural principles of the city should have been established during the summer evenings, when there are traditionally not enough cultural events. Our intention was for the festival to grow from a local to a regional event. Among the programs that were realized then, we should mention: Festival of club and street musicians, Festival of street theatre, Festival of children's creativity, Festival of drummers, Festival of traditional creativity, Vidovdan evenings, Modafest. In recent years, for financial reasons, we have returned to the old concept of "Cultural Summer", with a predominant reliance on our own artistic potential from some guest programs. In addition to traditional programs, Vidovdan Evenings, Le-Sax Fest (saxophonist festival) and the Jakov Mitic Memorial (accordion evening), the 21st "Cultural Summer" will present to the audience about 50 different programs: concerts of different musical genres, plays, literary evenings, dance and ballet, fashion shows, exhibitions, installations, performances, workshops. It is intended for different age categories and target groups. During the previous years, the event "Leskovac Summer Festivals" has profiled the character of a multi-media open-air summer party. It is designed to animate the citizens of Leskovac, who do not leave Leskovac at the time when the school year ends and when the holidays begin, through a large number of cultural, entertainment and sports events (theatre performances, pop and rock concerts, concerts of classical music, ballet performances and performances for children, literary evenings, promotions of various sports and martial arts). The event has its regular audience and in previous years attracted about 30,000 visitors over a two-week period. Attractive cultural and entertainment programs dominated. In terms of duration, it is one of the unique and longest manifestations in the Republic, so it is rightly included in the Republic calendar of events of the Tourist Organization of Serbia.

Manifestation photo

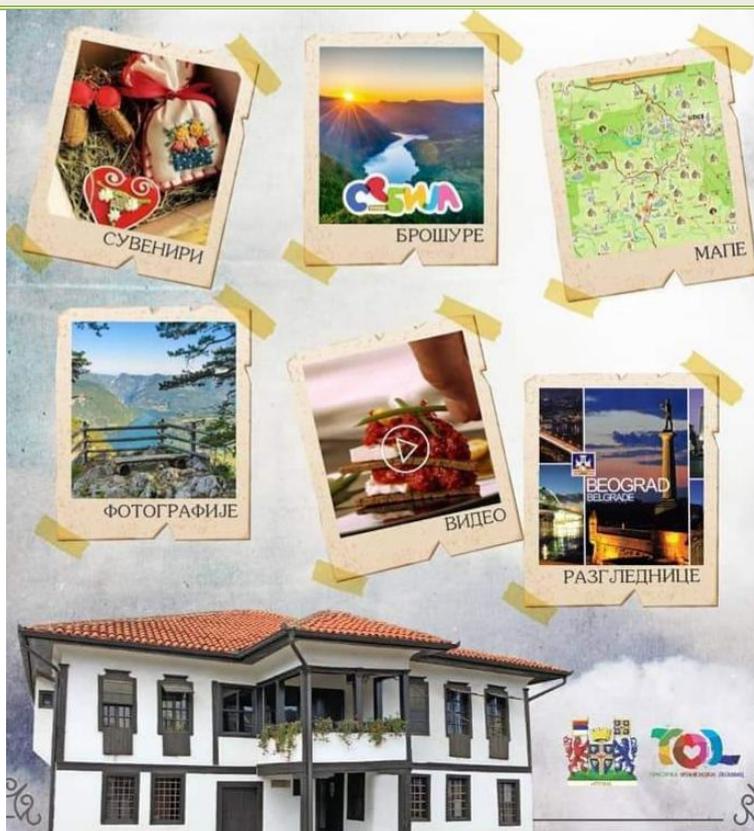


The name of manifestation:	Exhibition of Souvenirs and Tourist Publications
Place:	Leskovac
Time:	November
Organizer:	Tourist organization of Leskovac City of Leskovac
Internet portal:	https://tol.rs/
Visitors:	Native visitors from Serbia

Manifestation description

The goal of the event is to modernize and improve the tourist offer of Serbia, and through the exchange of experiences, following modern trends, encouraging creativity in order to promote traditional values, to emphasize the authenticity of the offer. With the participation of about fifty tourist organizations from Serbia, other tourist entities, artists, masters of old and traditional crafts and tourist workers, guests from the surrounding area are among the largest events of their kind in Serbia. It has a competitive character, and participants in eleven categories and three subcategories compete for their creativity, artistic ability in marketing and entrepreneurship. Due to the competitiveness, the event is enriched with new content every year. It is followed by seminars, round tables, various workshops, and it is planned that some entertainment programs will be offered in the coming years. Serious organizational innovations are also planned, so the expectations are that the event will acquire a regional character in the coming period. The exhibition of Souvenirs and tourist publications is another in a series of events designed by the Leskovac Tourist Organization to promote creativity and encourage tourism professionals to present, highlight and offer potential tourists a huge treasure that is created and preserved in Serbia and that Serbia has. It is a place where experiences are exchanged, landscapes and people get to know each other and plans for further activities are made. The exhibition shows that there are skilled individuals, talented and diligent creators among the tourist workers. This gathering grows into an important event in which it is a pleasure to participate, and the awards that are given at it serve as a source of pride for the winners and an incentive to invest creativity, effort, and resources in this important area of tourism.

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:	FAPOR - Festival of Amateur Theatre Directing
Place:	Leskovac
Time:	November
Organizer:	Leskovac Cultural Centre
Internet portal:	https://lkc.org.rs/
Visitors:	Visitors from Serbia

Manifestation description

The Festival of Amateur Theatre Directing - FAPOR is held every November in the Leskovac Cultural Centre, starting in 2013. This festival is realized with the support of the local self-government and the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia. The author of the project is Darko Zloporubović, editor of the stage program of the Leskovac Cultural Centre. The goal of the Festival of Amateur Theatre Directing is to present amateur theatre to the audience (directors, actors) and their affirmation and mutual creative competition in ideas. Also, the Festival contributes to the development of a fair competitive spirit and rewarding the best, as well as education and improvement of knowledge about theatrical art in general, through various types of workshops, lectures, and talks. In the foreground of this festival are directors (amateurs) as creators of one whole (play) whose work is primarily evaluated. The Festival of Amateur Theatre Directing in Leskovac has national significance. All amateur theatre groups on the territory of Serbia (Vojvodina, Kosovo and Metohija), as well as from the region, have the right to participate. The theme of the festival is amateur theatre directing. Through the finished play, directors and actors have the opportunity to show their vision and their views on various topics that surround us. In that way, they develop their own creativity in stage amateur creation, improve and perfect themselves, and also encourage others to join and show their talents, because amateurism is just the right path to true professionalism. At the same time, with their work and their projects, they create a new audience. In recent years, Leskovac has shown at amateur festivals in Serbia that it has a large number of talents who have been involved in theatrical art since they were little, they follow it and selflessly contribute to its development in the city. Numerous recognitions and awards at other festivals of amateur groups in Serbia (Review of drama groups of the Gymnasium of Serbia in Kragujevac, Amateur acting ceremony "Milivoje Zivanovic") speak about the success of Leskovac amateurs (since 2018, an amateur group called Dr Amateri of the Leskovac Cultural Centre has been officially formed). in Požarevac, Festival of Amateur Theatres "Teatrama" in Kruševac, Festival of Children's and Youth Stages "DOPS" in Jagodina, Festival of Youth Stages "FOS" in Bela Palanka, Festival of Amateur Theatres of Serbia in Lebane and Surdulica and a large number of awards at the festival in Prokuplje 2018. years). From the first festival until today, more than 50 theatre performances from various cities in Serbia, as well as from Srpska, have been shown. In addition to the hosts of the festival, amateurs from Belgrade, Novi Sad, Smederevska Palanka, Velika Plana, Smederevo, Cacak, Krnjevo, Sremska Mitrovica, Prokuplje, Blace, Kragujevac, Krusevac participated. During the eight years of FAPOR's existence, many famous artists from the professional sphere of theater art have visited, such as: Cisana Murusidze, director, Goran Sultanović, actor, Vlada Lazić, director, Sasa Latinović, director, Miloš Jagodić, director, Milorad Milinković, director, Dejan Tončić, actor, Predrag Gazibara Smiljković, actor, Dragan Boža Marjanović, actor, Midrag Krčmarik actor and prof. at the Academy of Arts in Kosovska Mitrovica, Ivan Bekjarev, actor, Nebojsa Dugalic, actor, Boris Pingovic, actor, Miodrag Dinulovic, director, Bojan Dimitrijevic, actor, Isidora Goncic, director, Predrag Stojmenovic, director, Vlastimir Velisavljevic, actor, Milica Milsa actress, Miki Damjnović, actor, Ivan Zarić, actor. Their presence additionally speaks about the importance of the festival, about their professional support to the festival and selfless help in their work and realization.

Manifestation photo



7. Festival amaterske pozorišne režije FAPOR | Leskovački kulturni centar

ARTXSTUDIO SA

The name of manifestation:	STRINGS -International Festival and Summer Academy of Music
Place:	Leskovac
Time:	The last week of July
Organizer:	Leskovac Cultural Centre City of Leskovac Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia
Internet portal:	https://lkc.org.rs/
Visitors:	Visitors from Serbia and the region

Manifestation description

STRINGS International Festival and Summer Academy of Music is, according to the expert commission of the Ministry of Culture and Information and the reactions of participants and the audience, the most important music event in Leskovac, which positions Leskovac as the youth music centre of the region in the summer months. The time of the festival is the last week of July. A large number of musical events during its duration - concerts, exhibitions, lectures, talks, various educational workshops, and the like. with the participation of the most important pedagogues and performers of Serbia, the region, and the world, it enables the raising of the artistic knowledge of each individual. Special emphasis is placed on the artistic development of the audience, which deserves concerts by top performers. The festival also includes a summer academy of music, which is attended by 80 to 100 students from Serbia and the region every year, with more than 600 classes held. The Summer Academy of Music is led by the most important music pedagogues of Serbia with the participation of visiting professors from Austria, Germany, and Ukraine. Crowded halls at concert events oblige us to raise the quality of the festival every year to the joy of a satisfied audience. STRINGS International Festival and Summer Academy of Music gathers music artists from all over the world and is the only manifestation of the Leskovac Cultural Centre that has an international character in the true sense of the word. The goal of the STRINGS International Festival and the Summer Academy of Music is the affirmation of young musical talents and the popularization of artistic music, as well as meeting with top performers of artistic and jazz music within their performances, lectures, and conversations. The goal is to enable the participants to raise the level of their music making through additional instrumental-musical training: affirmation of young musical talents and popularization of artistic

music; enriching the cultural life of the city during the season of summer vacations and holidays. STRINGS festival and summer music academy is intended for children and young people from 7 to 25 years old. The STRINGS festival was established in 2013 as the Summer School of Music in the violin, cello, and guitar classes. As the number of participants grew, so did the number of classes, so that after a few years they would define ten classes, namely violins, violas, cellos, double bass, and guitars, with a newly formed chamber orchestra workshop. In parallel with the classes, there were programs aimed at the audience, including concerts, exhibitions, lectures, talks, promotions, and the like. In 2018, the Summer School of Music grew into a festival that is also being internationalized. The Leskovac audience immediately recognized the quality offered to them and it became a significant supporter of the festival, while the Leskovac Cultural Centre as the organizer made an effort to regularly raise the quality of the festival with mandatory free admission to all events. The rapid development of the festival is regularly followed by RTS as a national service, but also by cable television companies, national daily newspapers as well as local and regional media houses.

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:	LEDAMUS – Days of music in Leskovac
Place:	Leskovac
Time:	October - November
Organizer:	Musical school "Stanislav Binički", Leskovac
Internet portal:	http://sbinicki.edu.rs/
Visitors:	Visitors from Serbia

Manifestation description

LEDAMUS (Leskovac Days of Music) is a serious and prestigious music festival of art music. LEDAMUS was held for the first time in 2009, and it was created as an expression of the desire for our city to get a festival where the audience will be able to hear famous artists from the country and abroad, as well as performers from Leskovac. This event has over 170 concerts held in the previous 13 years under the auspices of the City of Leskovac and the Ministry of Culture, which recognize the quality of our programs. LEDAMUS, as a traditional manifestation of artistic music, is unavoidable on the cultural scene of our country. This musical event is a true factor of Balkan and European integration. Within LEDAMUS, artists from Ukraine, Finland, France, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Italy, Norway, Hungary, Bulgaria, Germany ... as well as famous artists from our country, Leskovac soloists and ensembles performed. This

festival is a great opportunity to present the best in the musical life of our city. LEDAMUS is always turned to Leskovac artists and ensembles. Every year, the Leskovac audience has the opportunity to hear the City Children's Choir "Zvezdice", KO "Amorozo" and the Vocal Group "Libero". The Church Choir "Branko" and the Children's Church Choir "Branko" from Leskovac were guests at LEDAMUS. In addition to Leskovac soloists, world-famous artists performed: Nemanja Radulović, Stefan Milenković, Yuri Shishkin, Divna Ljubojevic, Bora Dugic, Roman Simovic, Vladimir Milosevic, Aleksandar Madzar, Aleksandar Sandorov, Edin Karamazov, Jovan Bogosavljevic, Jovan Maljokovic, Uki Ovaskainen, Mladen Djordjevic, Sanel Redzic, Marie Claudine Papadopoulos, Strasho Tempkov, Dejan Gavric, Janos Balint, Miomir Simonovic, Zoran Krajisnik, Vlada Maricic, Ljiljana Nestorovska, Aneta Ilic, Vesna Ginovska Ilkova and others. This festival is highly positioned on the music scene of our country. In 2014, he received the "MUSIC CLASSICS" award for a festival of regional significance, and in 2019 the October Medal for 70 years of existence and successful work of the Music School and 10 years of organizing the LEDAMUS festival, which contributed to the development of music culture and promotion of Leskovac throughout Serbia. Saint. Until 2019, the festival ended on June 21, on the World Music Day, with a concert of the most successful students of the Music School "Stanislav Binički". This festival also gives young people a chance to share the stage with renowned artists. From 2020, the festival is held in the autumn months (October, November). In previous years, LEDAMUS has fully justified the expectations of the organizers and the Leskovac audience, which shows a great interest in art music, which is growing from year to year. Concerts within LEDAMUS are held at all concert locations in the city: Ceremonial Hall of the City of Leskovac; Stage of the National Theater Leskovac; Hall of the Leskovac Cultural Center; Hall of the Center for Professional Development, Gallery space; Hall and premises of the Music School "Stanislav Binički", Leskovac. All events during the Festival are followed by radio and TV stations with a national frequency, local media, as well as the RTS correspondent from Leskovac. The artistic directors of the LEDAMUS festival are Maja Cakić, cont. violin and Biljna Miljković, teacher flute

Manifestation photo



The name of manifestation:	Days of Leskovačka Mućkalica
Place:	Leskovac
Time:	May
Organizer:	Tourist organization of the city of Leskovac The City of Leskovac and the Academy of Vocational Studies South Serbia - Department of Business Studies Leskovac
Internet portal:	https://tol.rs/
Visitors:	Visitor from the region

Manifestation description

The manifestation Days of Leskovačka Mućkalica (Days of the Leskovac shaker) was created as part of a well-known specialty from the Leskovac area, which is called a shaker. The event is held in May under the auspices of the city of Leskovac, organized by the Academy of Vocational Studies of Southern Serbia - Department of Business Studies from Leskovac and the Tourist Organization of the city of Leskovac. The first event was held in 2017, when the students of the Department of Food Technology and Gastronomy Management in the city centre prepared a shaker for 4,000 visitors. On that occasion, 350 kg of meat, 150 kg of onions and 250 kg of tomatoes and peppers were consumed, and the prepared shaker was distributed to the visitors of the event. Several legends are related to the origin of this specialty, and the most famous among them says that this specialty was first made half a century ago by Miodrag Gligorijević, better known as Dragi Bure. According to the still living contemporaries of this barbecue master, Dragi Bure prepared the Leskovac shaker for Josip Broz Tito during the stay of the President of the former Yugoslavia in Cairo, and the dish was made from grilled leftovers, which means that it was created quite by accident, thanks to the skill and imagination of this excellent barbecue master. The manifestation "Days of the Leskovac shaker" is growing from year to year, and now, in addition to students from the Academy of Vocational Studies in South Serbia from the Department of Business Studies in Leskovac, barbecue masters from famous and renowned Leskovac restaurants are participating in the preparation of the shaker.

Manifestation photo



In addition to the previously descriptive manifestations that stood out for their significance and potential, the following manifestations should also be mentioned: The Assembly of Nikola Skobaljić in Vučje is a new promising manifestation held at the gate of the Church of St. John in Vučje, below Skobaljić grad.

The festival is dedicated to one of the greatest Serbian medieval heroes through socializing, knightly fights, scientific and entertainment program, traditional sports competitions with the idea of presenting the history of this area in a modern way. The art colony of Vlasina on the shores of Lake Vlasina is one of the oldest in Serbia, with a tradition of 46 years. Well-known artists from Serbia and the region (12 participants of all generations) are participating in the colony, affirming contemporary art production. Contemporary art forms and expressions are promoted through expression and communication. So far, over 400 prominent artists have participated, thanks to which the organizer, the Leskovac Cultural Centre, has formed a collection of about 620 works of art. The artist from the school desk - the Festival of Children's Creativity is organized by the National Library of Leskovac under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Information of the RS and the city of Leskovac. This festival encourages creativity and creative energy in children and young people and encourages imagination and originality. The application of modern technology encourages children and young people to see and solve problems in a new and different way, using books and reading as an unavoidable element of human creativity, education, and culture. Such attractive contents have a great tourist potential for the city of Leskovac, because the "Artist from the school desk" is the only one of its kind in the region. Leskovac Science Park and Leskovac Science Club were opened as a result of successful cooperation between the Centre for Professional Development, the Centre for the Promotion of Science, and the City of Leskovac. It is envisaged that the Science Park and the Science Club will grow from year to year, as well as the interest of visitors to try and explore science in the open space through play and fun. A large number of visitors of all ages testify to their success. The Science Club and the Science Park are places that bring together schools, individuals, but also families who spend their time fun and educational. In addition to lectures, workshops, training, the Science Club event with the Science Park is a space that allows everyone to get out of the closed space and explore science by touch, eye, ear, or some other sense. Pleasant ambience and hospitable collaborators are just one part of this scientific story that gathers all science lovers from the youngest to those who are engaged in science professionally. Numerous projects and events, such as: Science Days, Science Truck, Researchers' Night and Science Fair, aroused interest in science and opened the doors of the center for the youngest, pupils and students. Among other manifestations and events, the 10 km long "Grdelica Regatta" stands out, which has been gathering numerous participants from Grdelica, Leskovac, Nis, Vlasotince, Predejane and other places in Southern Serbia for 10 years. The start of the regatta is in Predejan, and the finish is in Grdelica. Of the economic and tourist events, several stand out in Leskovac and the surrounding villages. "Strawberry Days" are held in Dušanovo, "Sour Cherry Days" in Lipovica, "Mill Days" in Vučje, "William Pear Days", "Potato Days" in Pečenjevac, "Traditional Products and Handicrafts Fair" in Brestovac, "Days" in Lakošnica peppers ", and in Leskovac itself - a competition in the preparation of ajvar.

4.3. SWOT Analysis

The joint SWOT analysis of tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac implies the identification and detailed analysis of the resource base of these destinations. It is basically an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The main goal of this analysis is to develop the perceived strengths in such a way as to seize the opportunities, to overcome or minimize the weaknesses as soon as possible, and to anticipate, avoid or reduce their negative impact. The SWOT analysis focuses on collecting the data necessary for good strategic planning. It is a precondition for the process of strategic planning and defining priorities, objectives, and development actions. The SWOT analysis was prepared with the commitment of all members of the Joint Tourism Working Group and represents the subjective position of stakeholders on the factors influencing the development of tourism. The following table shows a joint SWOT analysis of the observed area.

Table 6 Joint SWOT analysis of tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac

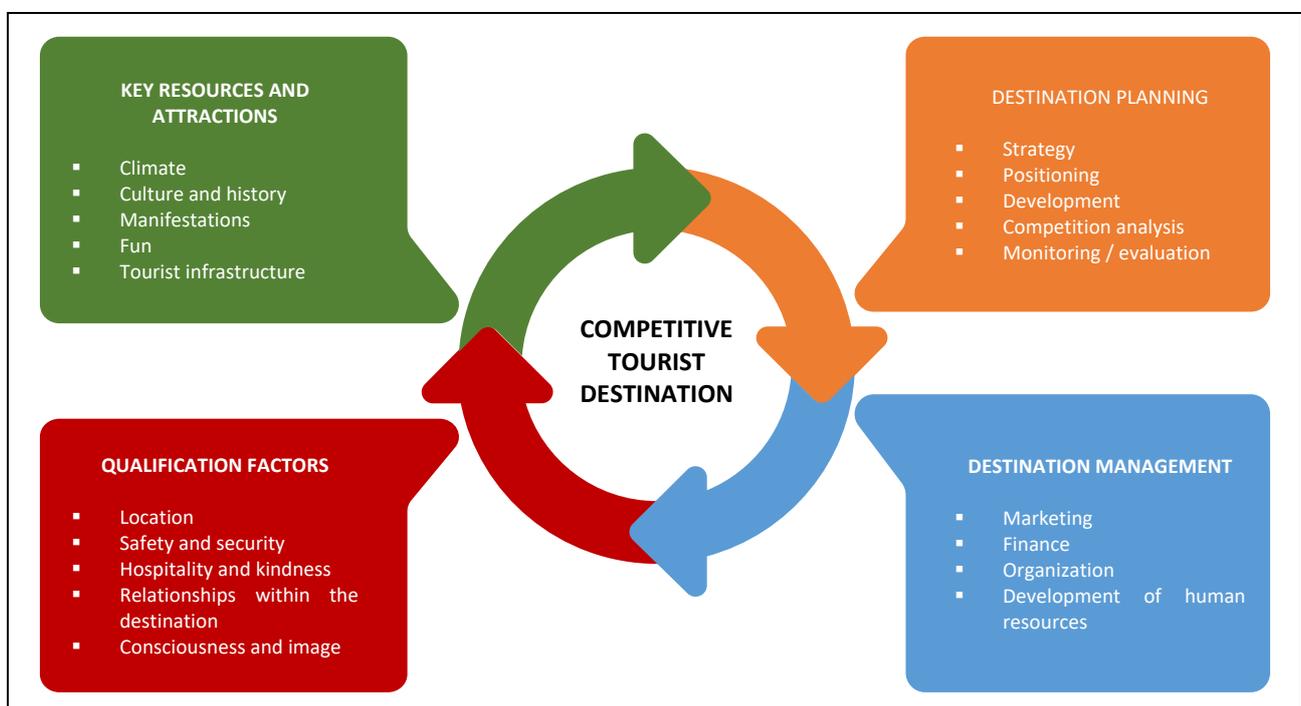
S	STRENGTHS	W	WEAKNESSES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich and diverse historical and cultural heritage. • Natural and cultural-historical locations and attractions. • Festivals and events • Tradition and folklore • Gastronomy • Community participation and support for cultural events • Proximity to the airport and excellent infrastructure connections • Diverse range of events (celebrations, music festivities, etc.) • Pleasant and friendly staff in tourism • Offer organic and healthy food. • Safe and secure destinations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing tourist offer is related to major events. • Lack of accommodation capacity during the largest festivals (Shopski Praznik and Roštiljijada). • Infrastructural challenges around large-scale events (utilities, taxi transport, parking, etc.). • Small number of competitive tourism products. • Undeveloped offer of other events. • Lack of joint product and supply. • Lack of offers for holidays and shorter stays of tourists • Absence of year-round tourist offer. • Insufficient horizontal and vertical connection of tourism actors • Underdeveloped and weak marketing.
O	Opportunities	T	THREATS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing portfolio of events and festivals • Development of partnerships and intensification of cross-border and cross-border cooperation. • Integration of cultural tourism with other tourist attractions • Connecting cultural events and festivals of the two destinations. • Connecting events and festivals with other tourist attractions. • Development of joint tourism products. • Connecting cultural events and festivals of the two destinations • Joint marketing and promotion • Training of tourism actors in the field of management and marketing 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsustainable management of tourist attractions. • COVID - 19 pandemics • Weak interest of tourists in new tourist products • Departure of trained staff from tourism and hospitality • Strong competition from other regional and national destinations • Slow adoption of innovations and new communication and marketing tools.

The previous summary table shows the elements of the joint SWOT analysis with the greatest impact on the further formation of the Common Strategy. The main conclusion of the performed resource analysis and market analysis is that the area has significant preconditions for tourism development, which are reflected in the existence of numerous cultural and historical monuments and significant natural resources, which have not been used adequately in development so far. The forces on which it is possible and necessary to base further tourist development predominantly derive from its spatial characteristics and resource-attraction basis. In addition, it is necessary to emphasize that strengths exist in some elements of the tourism sector, and it is especially important to emphasize the openness and hospitality of the area as an important force for further tourism development. Despite a number of constraints and development factors listed in the weaknesses, there are a number of large economic entities that have ambitions and opportunities to diversify into the tourism sector. Weaknesses are mainly related to the elements of the tourist offer, marketing and general competitiveness, i.e., the input factors of some future development. On the side of opportunities, the development of joint tourist products and the connection of events and festivals with other tourist attractions is clearly emphasized. The main threat to the long - term development of tourism is related to the current model of tourist attraction management and the presence of the COVID - 19 pandemic. Other threats are related to the departure of trained staff and the adoption of new communication and marketing tools.

4.4. Competitiveness Analysis

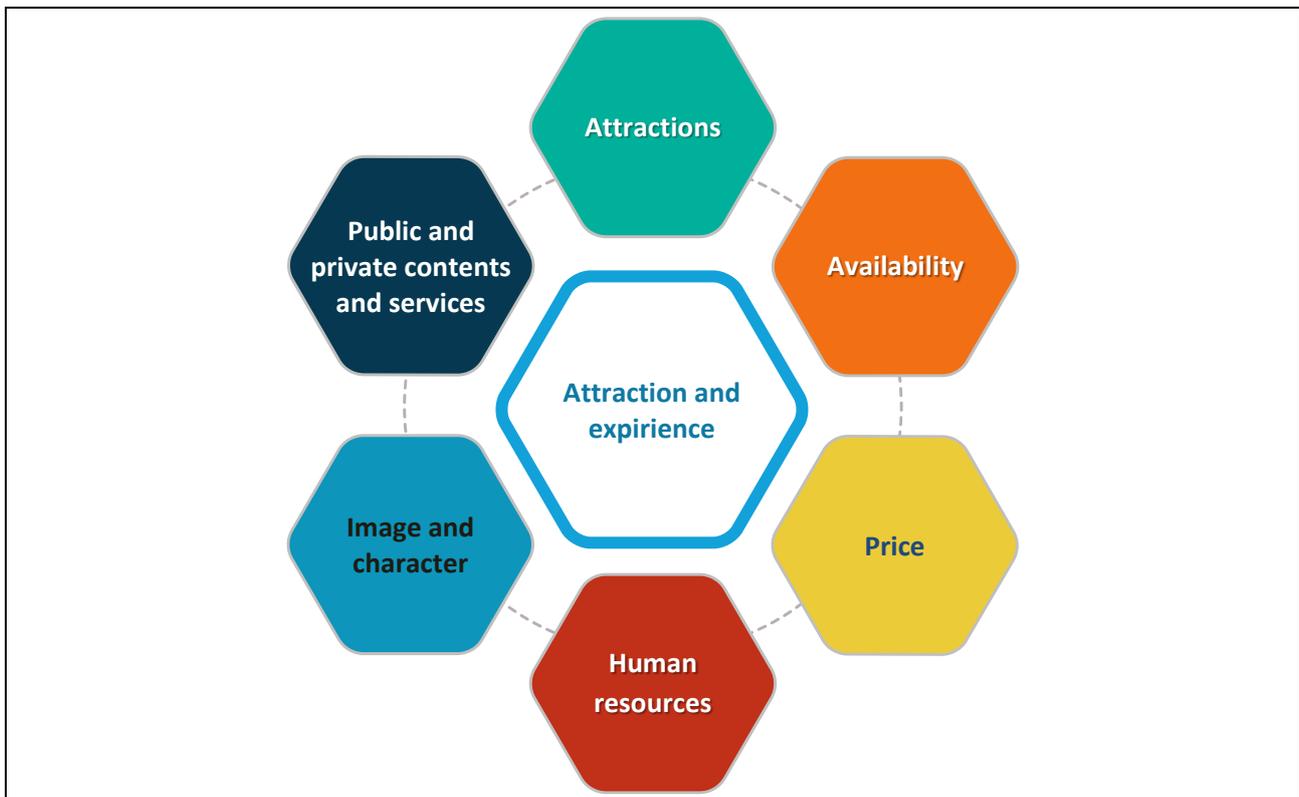
The competitiveness of the destination starts from a conceptual and integrated approach, where each subsequent level from the previous one generates a set of values that are touristy valorised and systematically shaped into the tourist offer of the destination, which fights for greater competitiveness on the market. The level of competitiveness of a particular destination depends on the existence and quality of attractions, the offer of added content and elements that provide added value to tourists and visitors. Development policies and marketing and management instruments in tourism achieve the right direction towards creating a unique identity and image of the tourist destination, and the achieved development of the destination is reflected in the satisfaction of the tourist and his perception of the newly created value of the tourist destination. A competitive destination integrates a set of different factors that work together to meet the needs of tourists (illustration below). Competitive destinations are areas with a pleasant, appropriate atmosphere and services of appropriate quality, where the local population feels comfortable, and tourists are welcome.

Illustration 9 Competition tourism destination



A tourist destination is a complex system that requires careful analysis of the overall environment, both external and internal components, in terms of successful strategic planning. The considered characteristics of the tourist destination, first of all the number and diversity of elements emphasize the importance of their harmonization in terms of creating added value for tourists while providing benefits for the local community, as well as appropriate sustainability of development. The first step towards the strategic orientation of the competitiveness of a tourist destination refers to the analysis of the basic elements of a tourist destination (illustration below). The second step is the analysis and selection of potential tourism products that are attractive enough and have realistic opportunities for future development. The possibility of developing a certain type of tourist product is determined in relation to the degree of attractiveness of an individual tourist product and the competitive ability of a tourist destination for a particular tourist product.

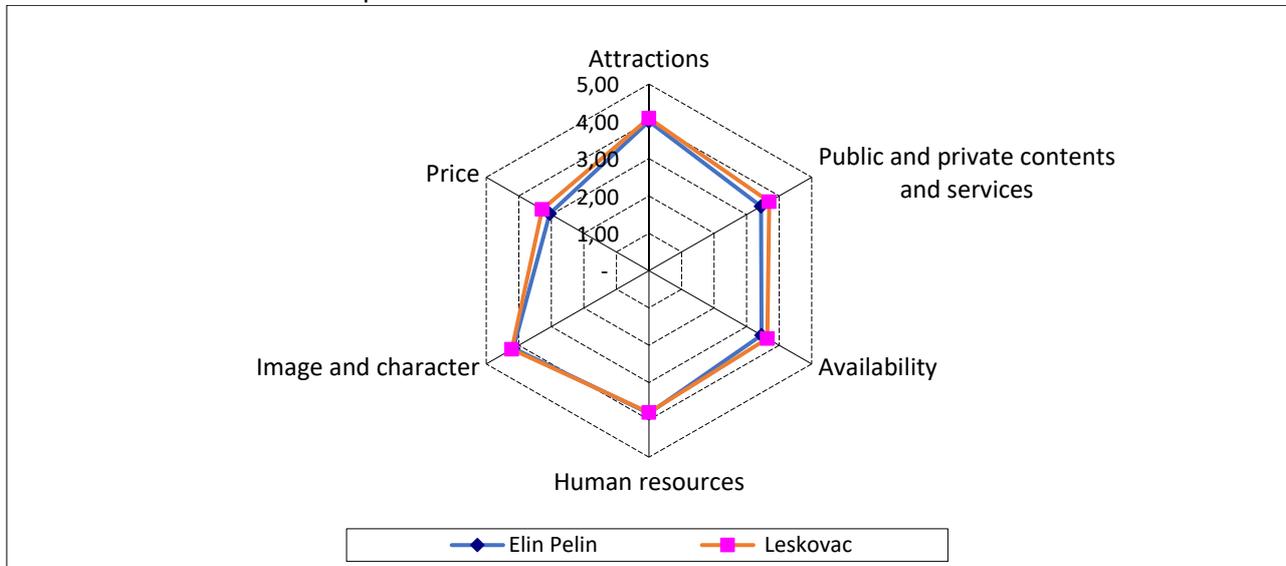
Illustration 10 Basic elements of tourist destinations



A tourist destination is a chain, i.e., a series of interconnected activities, which are necessary to create and offer on the market a value superior to the competition. Some of the activities within the value chain are key to attracting tourists and meeting their needs (accommodation facilities, transport, built attractiveness, travel organizers, travel agents, etc.), others have the role of support (insurance and financial activities related to tourism, educational institutions, media, etc.). The value chain approach was used as a tool to analyse the basic elements of the tourist destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac. The assessment is based on the attitudes and opinions of the participants in the survey research within the diagnosis of value chains in tourism. Tourists, tour operators (tour operators and travel agencies), accommodation providers, caterers, support service providers, institutions and support organizations participated in this research. They evaluated certain aspects of the tourist offer that make up the elements of the tourist destination Elin Pelin and Leskovac with a grade ranging from 1 to 5 (where 1 is the lowest and 5 the highest grade). The distribution of basic element estimates for both destinations is uniform (following chart). Image and ambience are the best rated elements, while the lowest rated value is money, i.e., the price of services. A positive image of the destination helps to awaken awareness and emotions about the destination, so it is an essential element for achieving a competitive advantage in the market. A unique character or image is necessary to attract tourists to the destination.

It is not enough to have only good attractions, services, and facilities if potential visitors are not aware of them. The common image of tourist destinations Elin Pelin Leskovac should be built in the future. Various tools can be used to promote the image of the destination (e.g., advertising and branding, travel media, electronic marketing). The price of services is an important aspect of the destination's competition compared to other destinations. Price factors refer to transportation costs to and from the destination as well as costs in the field - accommodation, attractions, food, and sightseeing.

Graph 3 Assessment of the tourist destination element



The research shows that the average consumption of tourists per day for both destinations is from 30 to 50 EUR. The average tourist in Elin Pelin spends between 25 and 30 EUR per night, spends between 10 and 20 EUR on food, while spends between 1 and 5 EUR on souvenirs. Other consumption is practically marginal. In Leskovac, the consumption of tourists per day is: overnight stay 25 EUR per person (lower class of accommodation). Lunch / dinner: 10-15 EUR per person. Refreshments and coffee 10 EUR per person. Purchase of souvenirs 2-3 EUR per person. Other consumption 15 EUR per person. For the destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac, it is characteristic that 64% of tourist consumption goes to accommodation and food services, while outside board consumption is 16%. Efforts must be made in this segment to increase tourist spending. In terms of price competitiveness in relation to the environment, both destinations can be considered competitive. The general impression of the research participants (46.67%) is that the destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac are partially attractive. Attractiveness includes a combination of different elements of natural attractiveness (climate, flora, fauna, geographical position, etc.) and social attractiveness (cultural-historical heritage, folklore, Melos, gastronomy, etc.). In terms of attractiveness, festivals, and the quality of food, i.e., gastronomy, were rated the best. Attractions are a basic prerequisite for securing a tourist destination on the market. The decision on tourist movement is made when there is a geographical area with natural or cultural resources that meet certain human needs, when these resources are activated as an attraction (objects or events that can be seen and visited) and when a potential tourist has knowledge about it. Tourist destination Elin Pelin has 39 tourist attractions. The tourist potential of the city of Leskovac consists of 11 natural attractions, 20 historical and cultural attractions and 35 cultural events, celebrations, festivals, and parades that are organized annually. These are the comparative advantages of the tourist destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac. The main difference between the comparative advantage and the competitive advantage of a tourist destination is that the comparative advantage refers to the available resources in the destination, while the competitive advantage is expressed in the destination's ability to use its resources efficiently and effectively over a longer period. and the general well-being of the destination. In this regard, key tourism actors must make efforts to activate existing attractions in the function of tourism development. Tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac are among the affordable destinations.

The destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac are accessible to a large number of people by road, air, and rail. Accessibility implies both geographical and economic distance. In the first case, it refers to the distance / proximity of the market measured in kilometres or length of travel, and in the second case to the costs that demand bears to reach the destination. Accessibility, in this case, implies the overall development of transport infrastructure between the market and the destination as well as the quality and quantity of traffic in the destination itself. Accessibility of the facility for people with disabilities is the least evaluated parameter (following table). He points out the need to harmonize tourist facilities so that the living conditions are available to everyone.

Table 7 Assessment of the tourist destination elements

Tourist attraction element	Marking parameter	Elin Pelin	Leskovac
Attraction	Attractive nature locations	3,69	3,35
	Cultural and historical locations	3,80	3,27
	Festivals and other manifestation	4,50	4,70
	Food and drink quality	4,10	4,50
	Local gastronomy	3,90	4,60
Public and private contents and services	Tourism infrastructure (accommodation and tourism objects)	3,42	3,98
	Tourism signalization	3,35	4,20
	Transport infrastructure (roads, parking)	3,06	2,98
	Service quality	3,90	4,76
	Entertainment and night life	3,53	3,22
	Public equipment for sports events	3,31	3,50
	Attractions for kids (playgrounds, children's parks, etc.)	3,66	3,10
	Garbage disposal from tourist locations	3,31	3,83
Availability	Accessibility	4,05	4,00
	Public transportation availability	3,02	4,10
	Public equipment for sports events	3,31	3,37
	Objects' working hours	4,00	4,09
	Accessibility of facilities for people with disabilities	2,91	2,63
Human resources	Employees' knowledge of a foreign language	4,00	4,73
	Hospitality	4,80	4,55
	Informational services	3,50	3,36
	Guides' services	3,00	2,78
Image	Reputation	3,75	4,21
	Hospitality	3,86	4,64
	Security	4,25	4,74
Price	Value for money	3,05	3,28

Infrastructure includes ancillary / additional capacities, equipment, systems and processes and resources necessary for the existence of each destination. There are, in the first place, communicative factors, roads, airports. All of them make the tourist destination accessible to tourists. Then there is the health care system, service, public services (police, fire service) and the like. On the other hand, the tourist infrastructure represents the capacities that rely on the infrastructure and they are mostly built funds that exist precisely because of the tourist activity. Their primary purpose is to accept and satisfy the needs and desires of tourists (hotels, camps, restaurants, theme parks, sports fields, etc.). There are a number of services and facilities to allow visitors to stay within the destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac. These include basic infrastructure such as utilities, public transport, and roads, as well as direct services to visitors such as accommodation, visitor information, recreational facilities, travel agencies, catering, and sales facilities. The average rating of the existing tourist infrastructure and facilities for both destinations is 3.20. According to the results of the research from the existing tourist infrastructure, the respondents best assessed the scope and availability of accommodation and catering facilities. The accessibility of the facility for people with disabilities as well as the installation of public equipment for sports activities received low marks. Tourism is labour intensive, and interaction with local communities is an important aspect of the tourism experience.

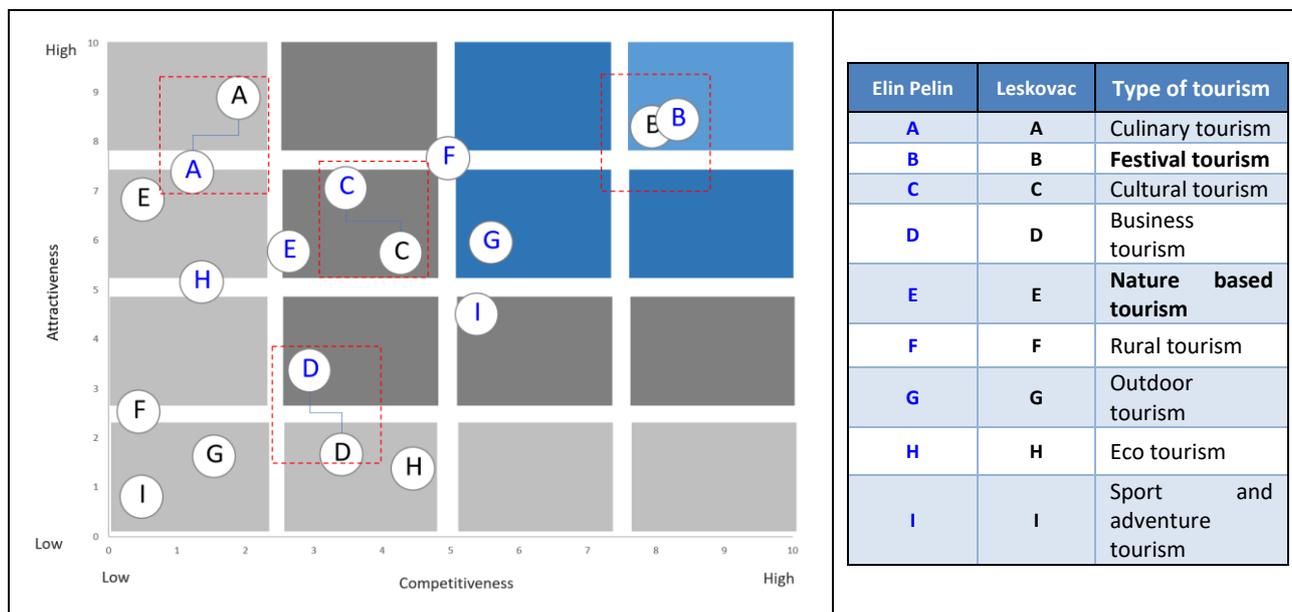
The development of tourism in a destination depends to a large extent on the available tourist resources, but for the development of tourism it is important that there is a critical mass of people who have the knowledge to valorise these resources. Both destinations have residents who are ready for tourism and are aware of the benefits and responsibilities related to tourism development. In the conditions of global economic changes, many tourist destinations face intense competition in all fields of business. In order to gain a competitive advantage, they must constantly look for new ways to differentiate themselves in the market. The desire to achieve competitiveness, on a long-term sustainable basis, is permeated with the desire to create harmony between different types of tourism. Only on that basis can we talk about the effectiveness of the development of a tourist destination. According to the respondents, festival and cultural tourism are the dominant forms of tourism in Elin Pelin and Leskovac (table below).

Table 8 Existing forms of tourism

Tourism sort	Elin Pelin	Leskovac	Average	Range
Culinary tourism	60,00%	71,74%	65,87%	2
Festival tourism	80,00%	73,91%	76,96%	1
Cultural tourism	63,33%	41,30%	52,32%	3
Business tourism	50,00%	39,13%	44,57%	4
Nature based tourism	33,33%	36,96%	35,14%	5
Rural tourism	13,33%	32,61%	22,97%	6
Outdoor tourism	26,67%	2,17%	14,42%	8
Eco tourism	20,00%	10,87%	15,43%	7
Sports and adventure tourism	20,00%	4,35%	12,17%	9

The findings of the research were confirmed by focus group participants who participated in an participatory analysis of the attractiveness and competitiveness of existing forms of tourism. The results of the research in the form of a matrix (illustrations below) show that the common points of contact between Elin Pelin and Leskovac are festivals and folklore with gastronomy as a spice for creating a successful tourist product.

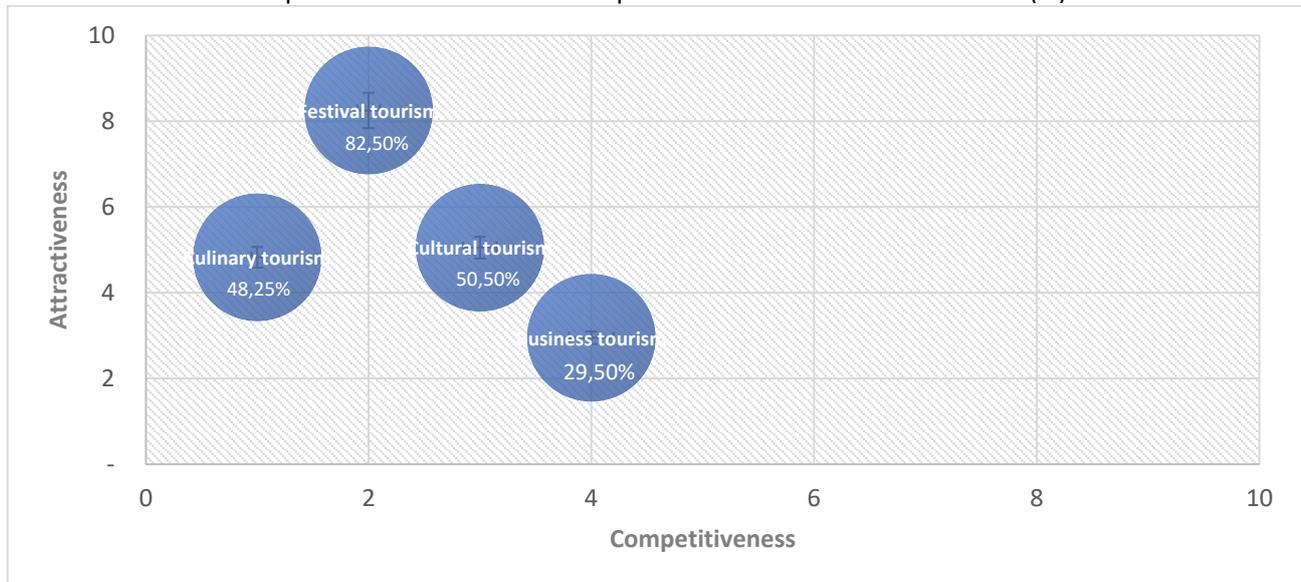
Illustration 11 Attractiveness and competitiveness of existing forms of tourism - Elin Pelin and Leskovac



Assessment of market potential is extremely important from the point of view of adjusting the tourist offer to end customers in relation to tourists. In order to succeed in a market where there is strong competition, destinations must focus on the types of tourism that have the best chance of success.

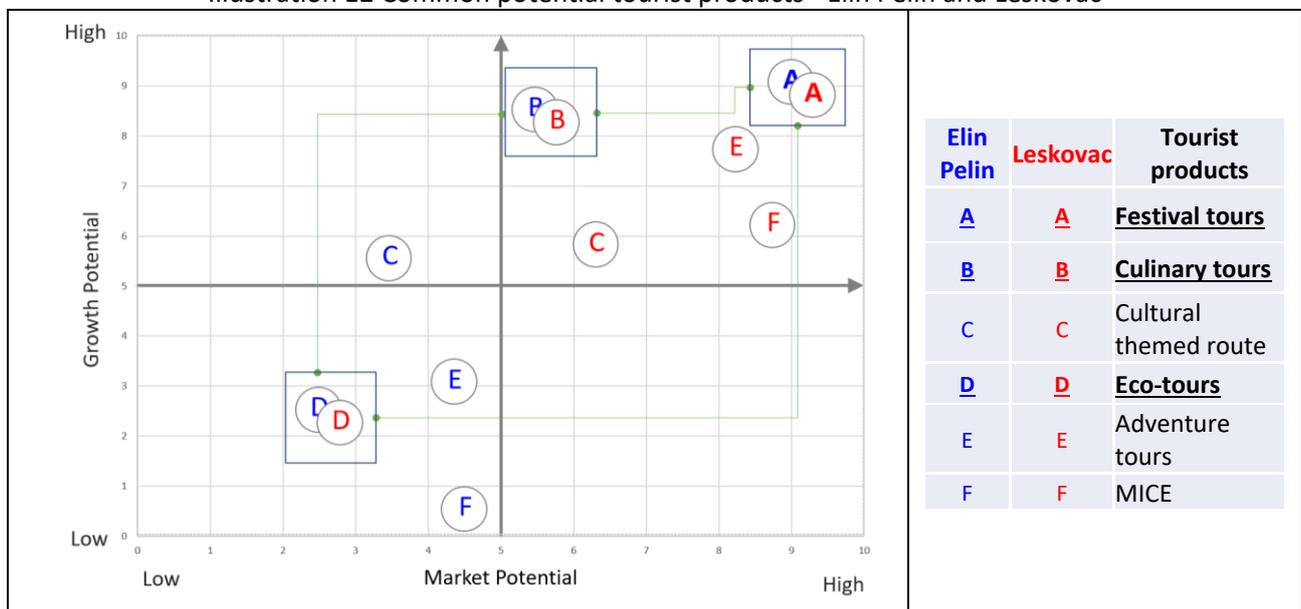
The results of the research in the form of the attitudes of tourists and travel organizers show that festival tourism has the greatest market potential (graph below). Other types of tourism considered have less potential. These facts lead to the conclusion that when making a specific product, different elements of certain forms of tourism must be combined.

Graph 4 Assessment of market potential - Elin Pelin and Leskovac (%)



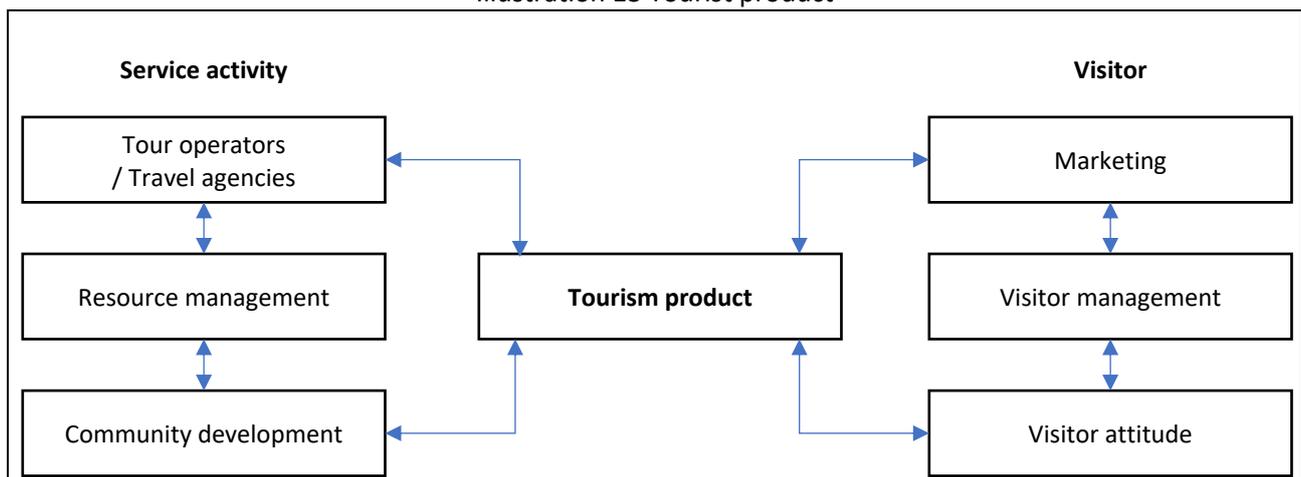
The valorisation of the market potential of existing resources and attractions is manifested in the development of tourist products. The selection of products that will make up the joint offer was identified during the research and verified in focus groups (illustrations below). According to the research findings, festival and culinary tours are especially interesting for Elin Pelin and Leskovac. These potential products are in direct connection with the rich cultural life of Elin Pelin and Leskovac, as well as numerous events that are organized in this area. Manifestations are activities of limited duration, which promote the tourism of a particular destination through the autonomous appeal of the event itself and thus stimulate tourists to directly participate in them. Manifestations are a specific product because they are held within certain time frames and have an unusually strong influence on the formation of the image of a destination. The events that have the greatest impact on Elin Pelin reputation are the national festival "Shopski Praznik", and for Leskovac "Rostiljijada - barbecue festival".

Illustration 12 Common potential tourist products - Elin Pelin and Leskovac



Changes in tourist demand and trends on the competitive side determine the tourist destination to focus on more efficient and effective models of tourism development management. Therefore, it is necessary to dedicate ourselves to development through the creation of an integrated product that will greatly raise the level of quality, determining the tourist not to turn to alternative destinations. However, it is important to emphasize that the development of such a product is not simple and involves not only the process of providing services in the destination but also the delivery of added value with a guarantee of quality throughout the value chain. It is especially necessary to pay attention that the environment in which tourists will spend their vacation is not endangered, and to develop tourist products according to the principle of sustainability. This means that development must be coordinated and planned in accordance with realistic possibilities. In addition, development must be in balance with the physical, economic, and social elements of the environment, because only in that way does it ensure the long-term exploitation and use of local potentials, and at the same time their protection for the next generations. These factors were **considered** when considering the tourist products of the destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac. as well as the interaction between the main tourism actors (illustration below)

Illustration 13 Tourist product



Source: Fennel, D., A. Ecotourism: An introduction, Routledge, London 1999.

Based on the conducted analyses of the attractiveness and competitiveness of individual tourist products, different competitiveness scenarios can be developed to identify the tourist products of the destination. The table below shows existing and potential new tourism products, which they could create independently as part of the entire sustainable tourist offer of the destination or as part of tourism programs and services of sustainable importance.

Table 9 Types of tourism and tourist products - Elin Pelin and Leskovac

Types of tourism		Tourism product	
Festival tourism	Festival and cultural parties	Gastronomy	Cultural plays and shows
Short break tourism	Weekend break (Leskovac weekend and Shoppe weekend)	Thematic tours (museums, monasteries)	Art and fun
Cultural tourism	Permanent and temporary exhibitions	Workshops of artists (painters, sculptors, writers)	Cultural heritage tours (churches, monasteries)
Circular journeys	Discovery of cultural heritage (Festival and culinary tours)	Discovering natural heritage	Monastery touts
Business tourism	Business events	Seminars	Exhibitions
Special interests recreation tourism	Golf	Recreations paths	Canyon exploration

5. Common Strategy

The Common Strategy combines long-term development perspectives (vision, objectives) and short-term measures (actions / projects). The approach is based on integral and joint interventions in the target area. These interventions stem from the needs identified in SWOT and other analyses. After analysing the key areas, the Joint Tourism Working Group proceeded to define the strategic directions of tourism development, which are presented below.

5.1. Vision

The development vision is a desirable and achievable picture of the future and its task is to create a positive synergy between the local context (people, settlements, and tourism products) and the global rules of the tourism industry (standards, human resource strengthening / education, business management, marketing, etc.). The common vision emphasizes key business aspirations and is focused primarily on key stakeholders in the local market, in order to provide a simple and understandable way and motivation to work together to achieve it through joint efforts and individual action. The common vision of the development of tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac contains a conceptual and operational aspect. The conceptual aspect answers the question of what tourism should be like. The operational aspect puts an emphasis on emotions and the story to be told upon return from the destination. A shared vision is defined in strategic planning workshops. This vision provides a broader strategic framework that requires a longer period of time to achieve, and it reads:

Attractive tourist destination with an authentic festival, gastronomic and tourist offer for entertainment and vacation

- Meet the soul of our region and feel the warmth of friendship -

Priority

1. Development of common tourism products

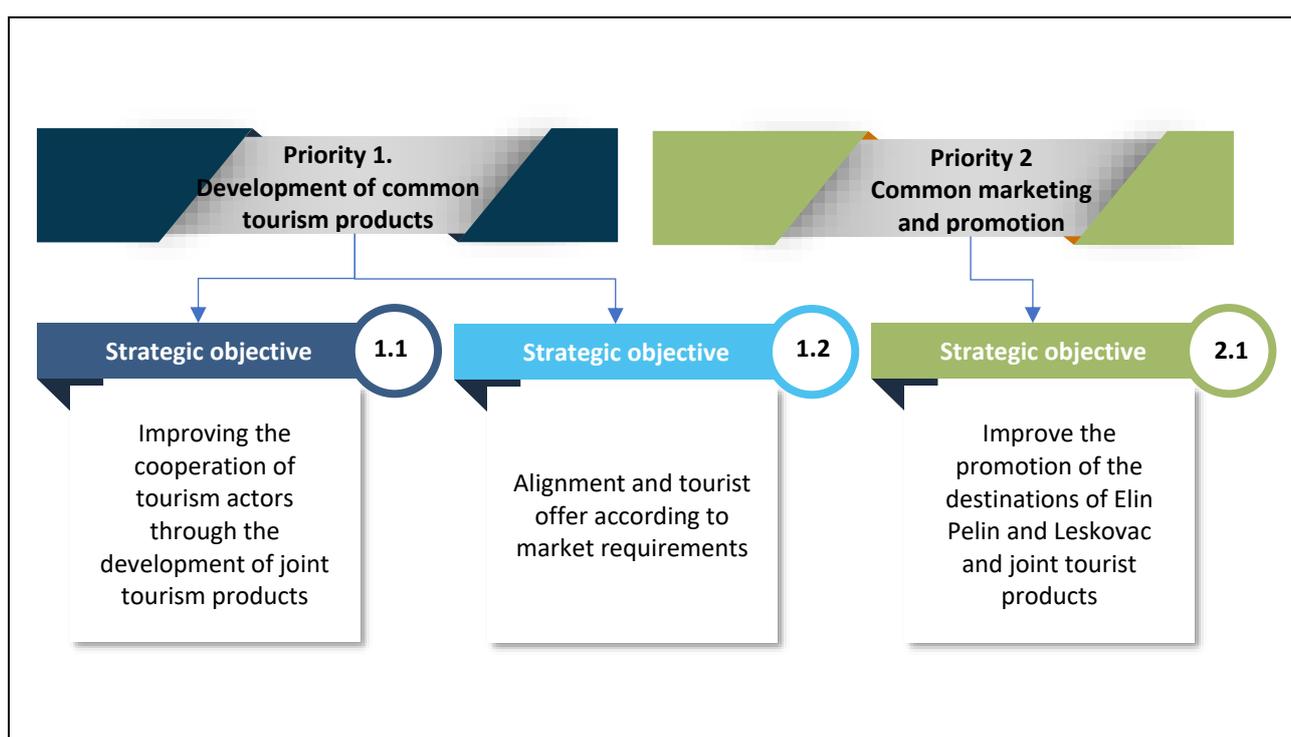
2. Common marketing and promotion

The Common Strategy is structured around two main priorities. The first is the development of joint tourism products and the second is joint marketing and promotion. The choice of tourist product significantly directs strategic development. The portfolio of tourist products is a summary of the entire tourist offer. On the one hand, it gives an overview of the current situation and on the other hand, it provides perspectives for the development of the products themselves and at the end of the destination. Defining a portfolio of tourist products aims to create a competitive advantage for the tourist destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac. Creating a recognizable image through joint marketing is the second priority of the Common Strategy. In order to be a source of competitive advantage, the image must be stable in order to achieve a long-term impact on tourists in the process of making a purchase decision. The image of the destination consists of two related components: perceptual (cognitive) assessment, which refers to the knowledge and beliefs of individuals (tourists) and emotional assessment, which refers to the feelings of individuals towards a specific destination. Together, these components create an image for the tourist, which is the basis for future purchases and choices. Respectable image and reputation ensure the creation of tourist satisfaction, their return to the destination and the spread of positive attitudes. The degree of tourist satisfaction is the most important result of the image of the destination and represents a subjective assessment of the perceived overall experience in relation to expectations. Market positioning of a destination is an image of the destination in the minds of guests. In the Common Strategy, the desired market positioning is defined with the intention to ensure its connection with the vision and to provide the basis for the elements of marketing planning. Regardless of the processes and projects that will be part of the Common Strategy, market positioning is always largely based on elements of existing identity and resource specifics.

5.2. Strategic objectives

Achieving a common vision of development is based on achieving development priorities and objectives. These objectives make it possible to put destination resources in the function of sustainable tourism development. They are the result of the intention of the community and, above all, tourism actors to take the necessary changes in order to significantly improve the quality of the tourist offer and attract tourists. When determining priorities and objectives, the long-term effects they have on the tourist destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac were considered. The priorities and objectives of the Common Strategy generate opportunities for the development and improvement of territorial and cross-border cooperation. During their elaboration, the principles of sustainable development and the principles of equal opportunities in terms of gender equality and different social groups in the region were respected. These are both horizontal principles and joint projects consider these aspects of development. For the implementation of the Common Strategy, three strategic objectives have been determined, which are shown in the illustration below.

Illustration 14 Relationship between priorities and strategic objectives



Improving the cooperation of tourism actors through the development of joint tourism products: Tourism products are not independent and autonomous segments, but represent the entire tourist offer of the destination, affect the quality and diversity of the offer. Differentiation of the tourist product is based on research and recognition of the unique needs of tourists towards the destination as a special geographical and socio-cultural region. Tourists are looking for more authentic holiday experiences and many companies now offer tourists the opportunity to enjoy hidden gems alongside traditional tourist attractions. Blogs, social networks and travel are an interesting way to discover hidden interesting places with new, authentic experiences and experiences. It is also necessary to point out the increase in visits to the most important segments of movable (museums, libraries, archives, galleries), immovable (archaeological sites, urban core, protected spatial cultural-historical units, monuments of folk architecture, fortifications, battlefields, execution sites) and intangible cultural heritage. Since tourists expect to be offered a complex product, which includes various elements (e.g., local food, cultural values, entertainment, etc.), investments are necessary in the development of certain common tourist products. In that way, partial tourist products will become better, more sought after and will contribute to the development of a unique image, attracting tourists, increasing tourist consumption, and encouraging tourists to come again.

The value chain assessment reveals that cooperation between the public and private sectors throughout the tourism value chain is weak. Cooperation between the public, private and civil sectors need to be ensured and strengthened through the development of joint tourism products. This means involving all stakeholders in the tourism industry, such as representatives of political and executive authorities at various levels, national tourism authorities, professional associations, owners and managers of tourism companies, NGOs, local people, etc. The most important task of the public sector is to ensure the sustainability of development and to ensure a fair distribution of resources among the participants. On the other hand, the private sector has the task of affirming the tourist destination. Synergy between these sectors in the future will contribute to the development of the local economy, raising environmental awareness, improving the quality of life of residents, orientation towards a common goal, image creation, protection of cultural and historical heritage, education, market position and competitiveness, etc.

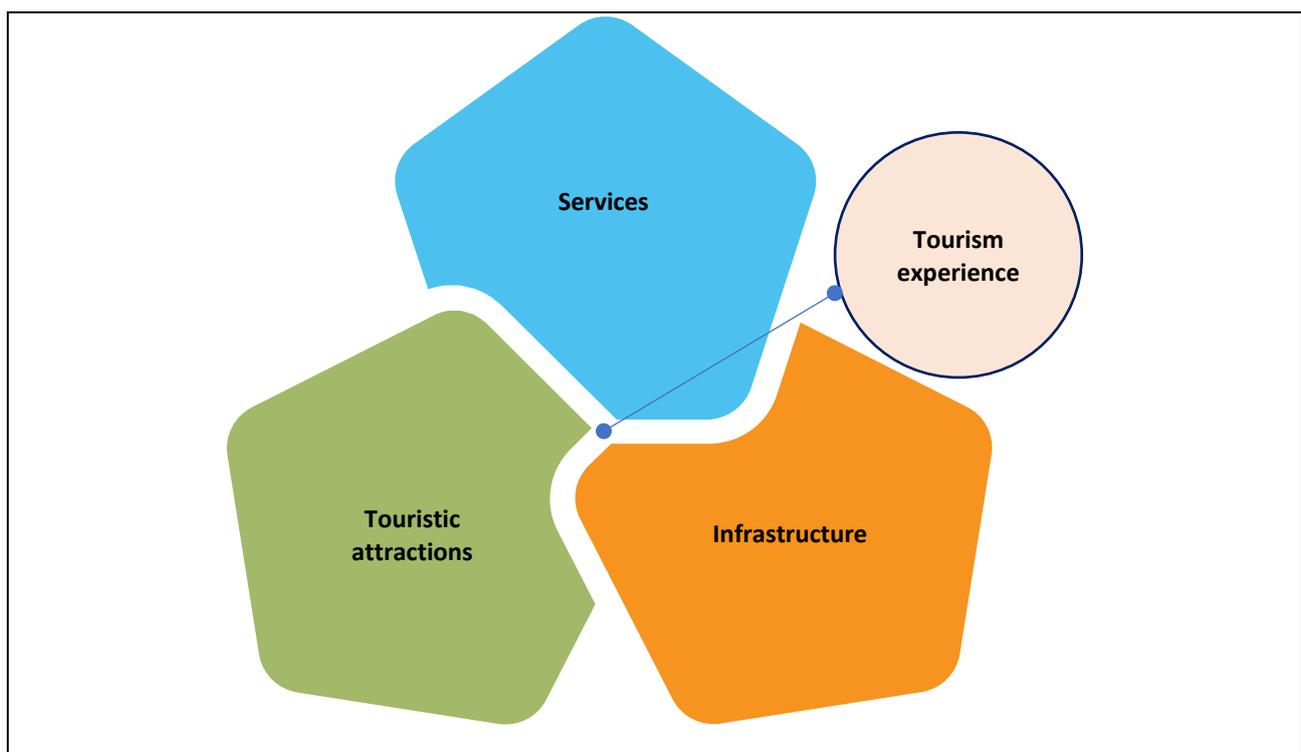
Alignment and tourist offer according to market requirements: At the core of tourism is the desire for tourist movement to places (destinations / destinations) that due to specific characteristics attract tourists. Today's average tourist is more and more demanding. He always expects better quality tourist services and at an affordable price. The pronounced mobility of the population and competition means that travel will be cheaper in the future (largely due to the reduction in the number of days of stay), shorter, but also more intensive. They will travel more closer to home and more times a year. Price policy has gained in importance. The price for a shorter stay is lower, but the experience must be intense (which provides an economic motive for the tourist service provider). Today's tourists travel alone or travel with their family (different generations). The importance of the destination they will visit has decreased, which means that they are no longer as committed to a certain destination as was the case in the past but are always looking for new opportunities for new knowledge, which is caused by increasing tourist awareness and competition on the supply side. The modern way of life, the growing awareness of a healthy lifestyle and the need to escape from everyday stress are influencing the growth of demand for targeted products such as short breaks or entertainment. Due to the lack of time, in order to simplify the planning of tourist trips, more and more tourists are opting for arrangements that provide transportation, accommodation, sightseeing, food and all other necessary elements for a pleasant vacation. In the period of climate change, the trend of returning to nature continues, which affects the increase in demand for ecological tourist products. That is why authenticity is much more important for tourists today than before because they want to feel a deeper emotional and cultural connection with the people and the community they visit.

Improve the promotion of Elin Pelin and Leskovac destinations and joint tourist products: Marketing of tourist destinations in the recent period is experiencing a major transformation of the business model. Tourism is becoming a carrier of economic and social messages in the broader context of destination development. Consumer perceptions are formed depending on the identity of the destination and the marketing of the holders of the tourist offer. Development and promotion of tourist products are factors for creating a competitive position of destinations. This requires professional process management and the full involvement of key stakeholders. Thanks to the spread of the Internet, it is possible to exchange opinions and experiences among consumers. The widespread use of the Internet and the active sale of various agencies, tour operators and individual hotels over the Internet allows consumers greater freedom and flexibility in providing quality information and organizing their own travel. In order to raise management capacity, it is necessary to apply new marketing methods based on the use of digital technologies. The public and private sectors must improve and enhance the important skills and tools necessary for new challenges in the marketing, sales, and distribution of tourism information to Elin Pelin and Leskovac. Promotional activities should be intensified on the markets of twinned towns and cities in the country and abroad with which Elin Pelin and Leskovac have economic cooperation.

5.2.1 Tourist products

Starting from the requirement that global competition of different destinations and / or products in tourism presupposes respect for the minimum rules of the game and development standards on the global scene, an analysis was made for potentially interesting products that tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac could commercialize. Today, there are about 300 different tourism products and experiences in the world, of which at least 60 are seriously commercialized. In doing so, each tourist product is actually a business area in which there is a specific exchange of value (experience) for money. A tourism product is a set of interdependent components that in practice is organized as a separate value chain (illustration below). It should be borne in mind that the former large summer vacations, lasting from 14 to 21 days, have been replaced by shorter vacations, but which are visited several times a year. For each of the presumed future tourism products, attention is focused on the basic definitions, the market, the types of clients, the potential and the dominant forms of distribution and commercialization.

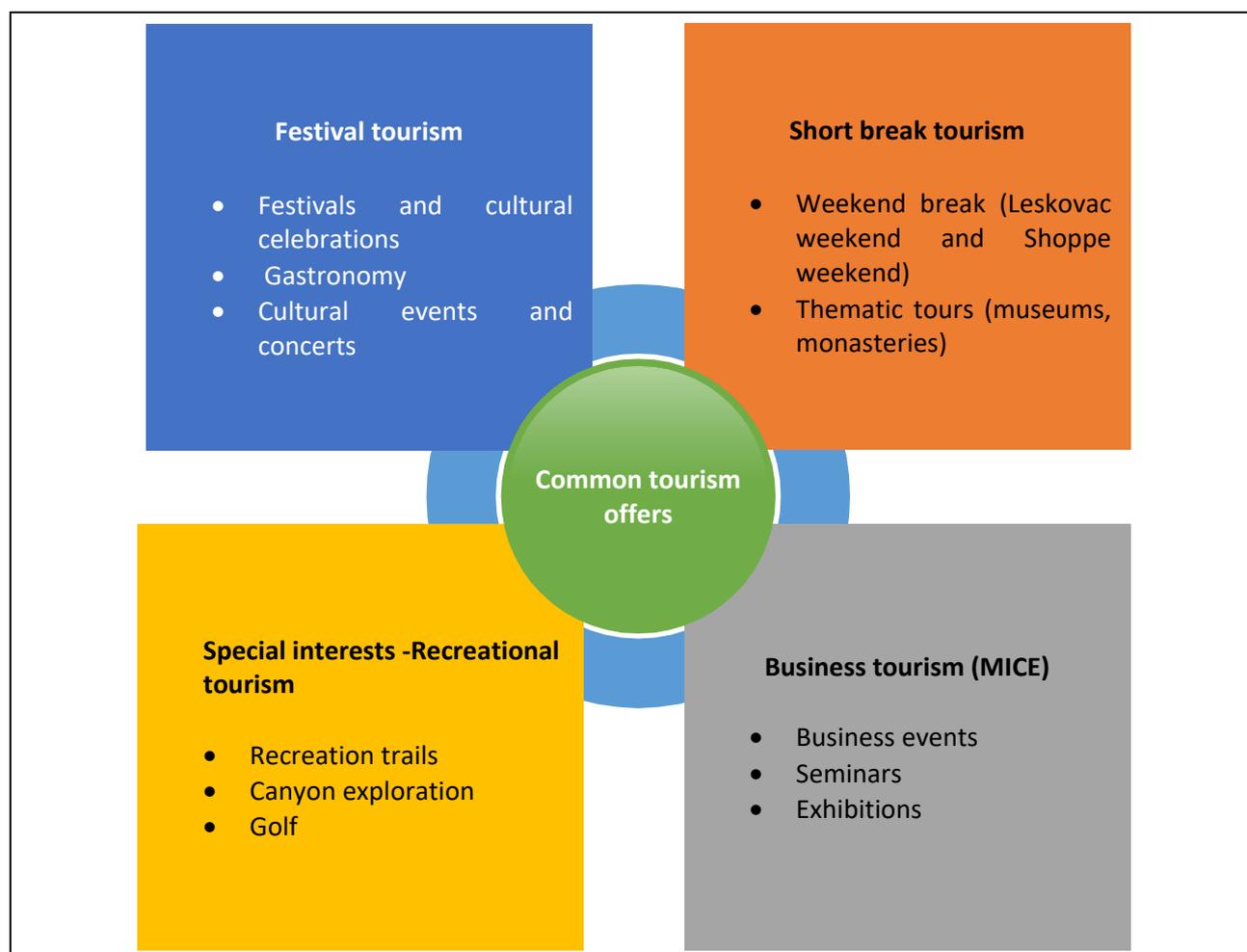
Illustration 15 Components of a tourism product



The added value and sophistication of a tourist destination is largely determined by the specialization of the offer of portfolios of tourist products targeted to certain market segments. For the further planning process, it is important to identify the key products for which the destination will specialize and with which it will become recognizable in the market. The objective is to focus the offer in order to adequately address the resources for the delivery of tourist products / experiences at the level of quality of the world's best destinations. The development of tourism products is a process and is based on existing natural and created resources, but requires their connection, interpretation, and improvement. The modern traveller is looking for unique experiences and during the trip he realizes his desire for new experiences, challenges, and memorable memories. Most tourists expect to be guaranteed a profitable and fully meaningful time spent on vacation. These tourists enjoy sharing their holiday experiences and are guided by the idea of "effort to relax", combining multi-event visits, celebrations, and active holidays which in particular includes the added benefit of returning home with new skills such as cooking or painting. That is why it is extremely important to get to know the key market segments, their habits, needs, lifestyle and desires during the development of tourist products, and to adjust the offer and tourist products accordingly.

Tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac offer exceptional opportunities for various forms of tourism. In addition to traditional forms, festival, and cultural tourism, they have the potential for many alternative forms. Based on the insight into the resources of the area, cultural heritage and natural resources, tourist products are grouped by individual types of tourism (illustration below). The process of development of tourist products should ensure the achievement of the objectives set by the Common Strategy. It is expected to provide: 1) Loyalty of guests, who will return to the destination and who will be ready to recommend the destination, by connecting products with key markets and target segments. 2) Recognition of the destination, i.e., creating an image, by providing authentic and best experiences to guests.

Illustration 16 Types of tourism and tourist products of the destination Elin Pelin and Leskovac



Festival tourism: Events in the form of cultural celebrations (festivals, carnivals, religious events, parades, historical commemorations), arts and entertainment (concerts, other public performances, exhibitions, award ceremonies) are pre-organized events that are capable of their content and quality attract visitors, independent of some other tourist attractions located near the venue. In addition to entertainment and information, these events promote the different traditions, culture and customs of the peoples and regions of a country, and thus provide numerous contributions to the community, through increased visits by tourists and their consumption. The event is a continuous activity that takes place once a year, and which promotes the tourism of a particular destination through the autonomous appeal of the event itself and encourages guests to directly participate and be involved. Festival tourism is characterized by dynamism and mass and allows tourists to participate in various forms of traditional and modern cultural holidays. These are festivals of various types of art, authentic events, including film, theatre festivals, carnivals, cultural holidays, artistic experiences, etc. Festival tourism also includes adaptations of famous national holidays and holidays of specific national, regional, and local symbols.

In order to become part of a tourist offer of a destination, events, as a rule, must attract participants and / or observers who are not part of the local community. Manifestations and festivals are specific products because they are held only once a year and have an unusually strong influence on creating the image of a destination. It should be borne in mind that all developed tourist destinations are working very intensively on creating a year-round calendar of various events in order to make their offer as attractive as possible in all other months of the year. This kind of event for tourists is usually the third or fourth trip of the year and lasts, on average, from one to three days. Manifestations are mass events with a lot of visitors, both local and their guests from other places. Festivals are usually intended for a specific target group and include a smaller number of visitors. The main motive of tourist arrivals is a visit to the festival (film, music, theatre), or some accompanying event, which is connected with the festival. In festival tourism, business effects can be calculated in advance. It is not possible to talk about seasonal oscillations of traffic (the exceptions are emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic) since all manifestations are planned earlier. The goal of organizing events and festivals is primarily to promote cultural, natural, and human values and potentials. It also opens the possibility of presenting the diversity and authenticity of a particular area, and thus achieves the diversification of the tourist offer. Existing festivals and events have a great impact on the image of tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac. The Leskovac Barbecue Week gastronomic festival has been confirmed as one of the main culinary events in Southeast Europe. In addition to this festival, in the last few years, the festival "Days of Leskovac Mučkalica" has also gained importance. The traditional folklore festival Shoppe Elin Pelin in the municipality of Elin Pelin is one of the very popular national festivals organized in Bulgaria. Every year, a large number of visitors enjoy the magic of this festival, whose main goal is to celebrate tradition and cultural diversity. Both tourist destinations organize dozens of events a year. Many of these events of national importance have the potential for a more intensive market breakthrough in the region. They also provide the opportunity to offer additional facilities and tourist products (cruises, special interests). The Joint Tourism Working Group analysed festival tourism and saw in it the greatest opportunities for the development of tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac. The main views of this working group are shown in the table below.

Table 10 Status and perspectives of festival tourism - Elin Pelin and Leskovac

Problems	Possibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of accommodation capacity during the largest festivals (Shopski Praznik and Roštiljijada). • Absence of year-round tourist offer. • Tourism offers related to major events (a small number of attractive festival days). • Undeveloped offer of other events. • Undeveloped and weak marketing manifestations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting events and creating a new joint tourism product • Connecting events and gastronomy • Creating a permanent offer • Creating additional offers with events • Offers outside the date of the event • Common calendar and event map • Joint marketing

Festival tourism has been increasingly developed in recent years thanks to the increasing mobility of the world's population, and the current availability of information. Festivals influence the extension of the tourist season or represent the peak of the same, they serve to strengthen the collective spirit, cooperation, and permeation of cultural traditions. Tourists related to events make up the widest population, with a visit to a specific event being either a short break or the third vacation of the year. The age structure of tourists is from 18 to 55 years, with individual guests from 18 to 25 years old, groups from 25 to 35 years old, and couples from 45 to 55 years old. The main motive for coming is a specific event, in which they have been participating for several years. They are additionally motivated by attractions, shopping, gastronomy, and nightlife. They look for a good value for money when choosing accommodation and transportation. They usually stay between three and five days. The main source of information is the Internet. Research of the value chain in tourism shows that the common points of contact between Elin Pelin and Leskovac are festivals and folklore with gastronomy as a spice for creating a successful tourist product.

Elin Pelin and Leskovac organize events and festivals "for the soul", whose people are hospitable, inclined to spend time, open and accessible. These attributes and hedonism are generally an important element for the future positioning of the destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac, as well as for the overall development of tourism. Festivals and events are elements of the tradition of tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac. At the same time, they are related to tourism. Also, the events attract foreign visitors, who are of great importance to the local community. As such, tourist events are an important factor in connecting tourists to these destinations. The identified tourism products (table below) are ideal for further development. Primarily due to high competitiveness and attractiveness and bring very high-income rates.

Table 11 Festival tourism

Tourism products	Market
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festivals and cultural celebrations • Gastronomy • Cultural events and concerts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target markets: domestic market, European Union countries, Eastern European countries, and countries in the region.
Clients - tourists	Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual guests • Groups of tourists • Couples with and without children • Organized guests (event participants) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June - October
Motives	Success factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love of entertainment and culture • Gastronomy • Socializing and having fun • Relaxation • Meeting new people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festival reputation • Possibility of fun and socializing • Quality gastronomy with mandatory local and seasonal elements • Courtesy of the population • High level of security • Adequate accommodation facilities • Awareness and promotion of the specific offer and tourist products of the destination

"Short break" tourism: It is a type of tourism whose goal is a short "escape" from everyday life, and which lasts one weekend and serves to relax and / or discover something new for a few days. Short vacations are based on visits to destinations with specific products and services within the tourist offer. A short break usually lasts between one and four days and includes 1 to 3 nights. The product includes several groups of products, each of which is the main motive for the arrival of a particular segment of guests at the destination. Guests travel for short vacations because of culture, food, events and manifestations, special interests, classic vacations, enjoying nature, etc. Short breaks are becoming popular outside the main summer seasons. Faced with such a trend, destinations must create their own and offer guests interesting content and a tourist product that can be consumed within a short stay. Therefore, special emphasis is placed on the activities of development of tourist products, primarily the strengthening of economic branches and niches that are in the function of tourism. In the last few years, research shows that many tourists plan to explore new destinations. More than a third (35%) think they will go on holiday to countries they have never been to before. Tourists who like to stick to tried and trusted destinations also intend to try something new and almost half (48%) will likely or almost certainly visit another resort or city in the country they have already been to. One of the indirect ways to connect local service providers is to develop synergies between gastronomy and short breaks. Gastronomy is a growing phenomenon, as more than a third of tourist spending goes on food, according to a report by the World Tourism Organization. 22% of Europeans, according to EUROSTAT, say that the main reason for going on a short break is a cultural experience, which includes cooking. Bulgarians spend almost 40% of their travel budget on gastronomic products. Therefore, home cooking is an important factor in terms of the quality of the holiday.

According to a survey by the World Tourism Organization, over 88% of its members believe that gastronomy is a strategic element in defining the brand and image of a destination, and over 67% say that their country has its own gourmet brand. The market for this type of product in Europe is extremely competitive. It is estimated that more than 30 million Europeans travel on some form of short break each year. The market of short vacations is divided between organized packages (transportation, accommodation) and individually organized vacations. Due to the growing number of low-budget airlines that make more and more European destinations available, potential tourists are increasingly self-organizing all aspects of travel, from transportation, through hotel accommodation and other services in the destination. In Western Europe, the independent reservation of this type of travel via the Internet dominates because all linguistic and cultural differences have been practically eliminated. During his stay, the guest consumes different elements at the same time, so from the perspective of organizing and managing the product, all the elements are viewed together. This type of product is usually realized over weekends, extended weekends, holidays, and the like. During his stay, the guest consumes different elements at the same time, so from the perspective of organizing and managing the product, all the elements are viewed together. This type of product is usually realized over weekends, extended weekends, holidays, and the like. This tourist product is not of a seasonal character and is very elastic in relation to the price. The main clients of short vacations are couples who have not yet started a family, couples who have adult children and younger people (between 15 and 25 years old). Guests predominantly organize this type of trip over the Internet where they gather all the necessary information. Short vacations in Elin Pelin and Leskovac have great development potential due to the good position of both destinations and the growing market demand for these vacations. Both destinations have the necessary resources and attractions that are easy to offer as an integral part of a short vacation package. In the short term, short breaks may be the first step towards the development of other products, such as rural tourism and cruises. Rural tourism in the form of the Shopski / Leskovac weekend represents a synergetic potential, especially for the city of Leskovac. In the medium and long term, short vacations should be based on increasing the quality of products and services according to international standards, following the differentiation and specialization of tourism products and services according to international standards and increasing the overall value for clients. The identified tourism products (table below) are ideal for further development.

Table 12 Short break tourism

Tourism products	Market
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekend vacation (Leskovac weekend and Shop weekend) • Thematic tours (museums, monasteries) • Arts and entertainment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target markets: countries of the region and domestic market.
Clients - tourists	Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couples who have not yet started a family • Couples with adult children • Younger people (between 15 and 25 years old) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole year: 52 weeks
Motives	Success factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental relaxation and mental rest • Withdrawal from a stressful life • Changing the environment • Trend "slow down the pace of life" • Need to "recharge the batteries" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability and up-to-datedness of tourist information • Availability of basic and ancillary services • Value for money • Marking and arrangement of tourist attractions • Preservation of identity and originality of the destination

Cultural tourism: Culture represents the social identity of a nation, testifies to its history and level of development. The terms cultural heritage and cultural tourism refer to a tourist product based on heritage and culture. Cultural heritage is much more than monuments and buildings that have been preserved over the centuries. The cultural heritage of humanity includes both a living expression and a tradition that communities and groups in every part of the world inherit from their ancestors and pass on to future generations. Intangible cultural heritage provides social communities and their individuals with a sense of identity, helping them to understand the world in which they live and giving meaning to their lives. Tangible and intangible resources of cultural tourism destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac are old crafts, customs, traditions, folk costumes, folk beliefs, dance (folklore), folk songs, various festivals, local events, national and local food and drink, linguistic and cultural events, theatre, film, poetry and literary festivals, exhibitions, galleries, museums, monuments, archaeological sites, and buildings. Various cultural institutions such as cultural centres (reading rooms), museums, theatres, as well as various events of local, regional, and international importance contribute to the overall satisfaction of tourists and complement the content of their stay and tourist experience. One of the important tourist motives is related to getting to know the social values of a certain country, religion, or place. According to the World Tourism Organization, 37% of all tourist trips contain cultural elements. Cultural tourism is a complex product and when planning the development of cultural tourism, there is a need for its clear definition and for identifying the basic trends that need to be considered in this process. Conceptually, cultural tourism is defined as the travel of people outside their place of residence with the aim of gathering new experiences that include visits to cultural and historical sites, museums, galleries, music and stage events, festivals, places of sacred heritage, creative workshops, and thematic routes. Cultural tourism is recording continuous growth rates. According to research, cultural tourism accounts for as much as 37% of all international tourism and is growing at a rate of 15% per year. Cultural tourists are educated, looking for experience, visiting attractions that are not interesting to other tourists, so it can be said that cultural tourism is a growing market. With global growth, there is a growing demand for a variety of products of special interest, including cultural tourism. Such trends are largely the result of growth in available revenues, new and cheaper modes of transportation and increased use of information and communication technologies. However, in addition to the forecasts of the growth of tourist arrivals and overnight stays, it is even more important to observe what is happening in the field of qualitative trends, i.e., primarily in the system of tourist values of consumers that reflects on their lifestyle in general. At the same time, the offer at the destinations is changing and requires a quick adjustment. Social, technological, economic, environmental, and political changes in society in many ways affect the development of tourism products and consumption. The development of technology enables the destination to modernize its cultural offer and the way of presenting its history, heritage, and certain archaeological artifacts. The global trend is the transition of classical museums to interactive and digital presentation models (including virtual reality), as well as the opening of smaller visitor centres in which tourists are the main participants and creators of the experience. Culturally guided tourists are in practice divided into "culture motivated tourists" (they consume cultural products as part of their general travel) and "specific cultural tourists" (they come to a destination specifically because of certain cultural elements and products). These tourists spend more per trip and per day than the average tourist. They are mostly highly educated, high-income, and employed equally in the public and private sectors. They choose a destination based on knowledge before the trip. They are inspired and motivated by the main attractiveness they can see, experience in the chosen destination. Travel decisions are made based on previous experiences, recommendations from relatives and friends. The age group of these tourists is from 27 to 44 years. Research shows that in Europe, as many as 42% of all tourists consume a certain cultural product during their general travel and stay at the destination. Most cultural trips (55%) are generally of short duration up to 4 days. A tourist product such as cultural heritage roads (tour of churches and monasteries) raises awareness of cultural identity and at the same time enables the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. In cultural tourism, local participation and local ownership are of particular importance due to the nature of the resources. The advantages of local participation are reflected in the fact that community members have the right and opportunity to decide on the development of cultural tourism. They are most interested in protecting their natural and cultural resources, way of life and local culture. This achieves the preservation of cultural diversity and the authenticity of tourist destinations.

In addition, their influence on providing financial support for the protection of heritage from the realized income from tourism is important, i.e., deciding on a more adequate direction of funds between the local and national level of government. A key component is partnership because a large number of actors are involved in cultural tourism. These actors include tourists, the tourism industry (social and private), the local community, cultural institutions, heritage protection institutions and educational institutions. The symbiosis of culture and tourism and cooperation between other relevant sectors brings mutual benefits. Cultural tourism appears through almost all tourist products of the destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac. Cultural resources and tourism products together form a whole. Only in their synergy can we get a quality product that meets the requirements of the market and time (table below). Cultural identity, gastronomy, music, art as well as the way of life of the hosts, must become a reflection of the intimate hospitality and special features of the tourist offer of the destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac. In this way, tourist products will gain in importance and value for certain target groups and be in line with modern trends and needs of guests.

Table 13 Cultural tourism

Tourism products	Market
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural heritage roads (churches, monasteries) • Permanent and temporary exhibitions • Workshops of artists (painters, sculptors, writers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target markets: domestic market, European Union countries, Eastern European countries and countries in the region.
Clients - tourists	Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families with children • Couples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole year
Motives	Success factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding spiritual perspectives (believers) • Love of culture and cultural events • Experiencing the beautiful • Relaxation • Socializing with people • Tradition • Getting to know important historical events (from books and legends) • Visit to churches and monasteries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of cultural and entertainment events • Interpretation of historical and cultural content using modern technology. • Organization of cultural events (permanent and temporary exhibitions and art workshops) • Various types of accommodation • Hospitality of people and hosts • Thematic and educational pathways

Cruises: are an important tourist product, and they refer to vacations that include the arrival of tourists by bus, car, train, or plane, and after that they usually start the tour with a certain topic. The two basic types of this product are multi-country round trips and round-trip tours within a country. Most tours have a specific theme and usually last from three days to more. Given the small infrastructural changes required for the launch of this product, as well as the extremely large base of potential users, this product represents a great development potential of tourism destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac. Especially because, in addition to international trends and placement on the global market, it is increasingly attractive for the regional markets of Central and Southeast Europe. Most tours last from 2 to 3 nights and are sold through a wide network of travel and agencies in the area of emitting markets. Usually, each tour has its own theme. For the destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac, circular pleasure tours are interesting, where the main motive is enjoyment without a special theme, and the circular scenography tour is the main motive forgetting to know and studying natural, historical, and cultural attractions. According to the available data, pleasure tours and circular scenography tours represent 56.6% of the total volume of cruises. tourists mostly buy this form of vacation for their own enjoyment of the scenery and society. Most often, they have already used this type of product in the past two years, both on the domestic and international market. They love art (ballet, opera), they are looking for special natural attractions. Their interests extend to shopping and gastronomy (especially wines). They like quality accommodation, they prefer hotels. Participate in outdoor activities (hiking, biking, bird watching, sailing, golf).

Since the cruise product can be commercialized quickly, it is extremely important to reach an agreement on the choice and professional organization of 3 to 5 tours. After that, they should be promoted and distributed as soon as possible through available channels.

Table 14 Cruises

Tourism products	Market
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovery of cultural heritage (Festival and culinary tours) • Discovering natural heritage • Monastery tours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target markets: domestic market, European Union countries, Eastern European countries, and countries in the region.
Clients - tourists	Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups of people • Younger people • Younger couples without children • Older couples without children • Pensioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March - October
Motives	Success factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting to know the cultural heritage and history of the area • New knowledge • Discovering and enjoying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close cooperation with travel agencies • Arranged information and communication boards in the field and the arrangement of thematic roads. • Arranged roads to monasteries and churches • Offer excursions and additional activities • Various types of accommodation • Hospitality of people and hosts

Business Tourism (MICE): The product of business and MICE tourism refers to trips whose main motive is business meetings, motivational / incentive trips, conferences, business fairs and exhibitions. The very core of MICE as a tourism product involves the travel of consumer business segments outside their usual place of residence. In addition to business-motivated trips, it is necessary to distinguish the element of motivation that refers to the employees of a particular organization who make the trip as a reward for work, team building or socializing and networking. The international market of business meetings can be divided according to several different criteria: number of delegates, type of industry, purpose of business meetings, organizer of the meeting and others. One of the most common criteria for segmentation of business meetings is the criterion of the organizer of the meeting. According to this criterion, these events can be divided into two main groups: business gatherings and gatherings of associations. Business events are organized in professionally developed congress centres, but also in hotels and university spaces and spaces for cultural events. By economic sectors, most business events take place in electronics, finance, and transport. Individual business trips differ from other forms because they are organized for individual travellers and the destination is known and determined by the requirements of the business. These trips are occasional in business life and often take the form of group trips. The MICE product has a very mild seasonality where large meetings and business events during May and June, as well as September and October are most preferred. Most business trips last up to three days, and in rare cases up to 7 days. The main motives for business travel include sales activities, education, corporate meetings, presentations / launches of new products and services, etc. Business tourism is a highly profitable segment of the tourism industry and consists of all travel related to employee travel or business interests. Business tourists spend more, not only on hotels and restaurants, but even on entertainment activities such as retail visits and local attractions such as museums and theatres. In fact, they were found to spend three times more than the average free tourist. The number of business and MICE guests is constantly growing in line with globalization and the inclusion of new markets in the sphere of interest of large corporations.

Target groups are corporate business guests, individual business guests, governments, government agencies, regional and global agencies, air crews, etc. The average business guest is between 25-55 years old, mostly male, comes from an urban environment, uses an airplane or car as a means of transport, reserves accommodation via the Internet, stays in hotels of higher and high class. By professional status are directors, owners, freelancers or middle management, workers, pre-workers, employees, and trainees. MICE market trends are stable with high revenue per client. For the tourist destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac, in the medium term, the product of business and MICE tourism should primarily be promoted on the domestic and to some extent on the regional market. Accelerating the development of this product is necessary because it has a positive impact on extending the stay of business guests and getting to know the destination, and thus on the additional development of other products, such as round trips and short breaks.

Table 15 Business tourism (MICE)

Tourism products	Market
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business events • Seminars • Exhibitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target markets: domestic market and countries of the region
Clients - tourists	Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized business guests. • Individual business guests. • Representatives of professional organizations and associations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April - November
Motives	Success factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and training • Employee reward and motivation • Changing the environment • Participation in professional and business meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranged environment and good reputation and positioning of the destination. • Rich offer of additional facilities (clubs, restaurants, events, etc.). • Organization of special programs with the connection of various tourist products to encourage this type of rewarding business trips. • Cooperation with organizers of prize trips. • Quality accommodation offer and equipment for organizing congresses, conferences, and seminars.

Tourism of special interests: it is connected with certain, special interests of guests (niches) who come to the destination. Tourists are becoming more demanding and experienced, so the demand for unusual and non-standard products is growing. Guests mostly travel because of some special interest, in order to enjoy it, whether it is a hobby, physical activity, interest in a certain topic or destination. At the same time, tourists expect experience and excitement, or peace, where the abilities in a certain activity are primarily tested. Such trips are mostly individual or in small groups, and guests are more experienced and demanding. There is a growing demand for products of special interest and there is continuous pressure to expand the destination and the number of market niches within this product. Special interests are increasingly in the offer of large agents and tour operators. Special interests are a product that enables good positioning of the destination. For the destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac, the most interesting are the recreation and health trails around Lake Ognyanovo, Elin Pelin and along the gorge of Vucjanka Leskovac. Exploring the Vučjanka canyon is an existing tourist product called a tour of the Vučjanka canyon (Vučjanka Canyon Tour). There is a golf course "St. Sophia" in Elin Pelin. The golf course is located in the village of Ravno Pole and covers an area of 526.32 ha. The course offers a unique combination of a modern golf course, a modern restaurant, and a spa. The golf course is the first certified golf course in Bulgaria with an official rating from the European Golf Association. This is an exceptional resource for Elin Pelin. Tourist golf is the involvement of tourists in some form of contact with golf as a sport (eg going to a scientific conference with a presentation of golf at the destination). Golf courses are an integral part of the tourist offer of all developed countries.

The experiences of countries with a developed golf offer, especially those that have the opportunity to play throughout the year due to favourable climatic conditions, show that the demand for this sport is highest out of season and relatively low in season (July-August). This type of demand significantly affects the extension of the tourist season. According to the European Golf Association, there are about 6,800 golf courses and 4.2 million registered golfers in Europe. But it is known that in many European countries there is a large number of unregistered players. It is estimated that there are about 8 million golfers in Europe today. The most important receptive destinations are Spain, Portugal, Turkey, France, Scotland, Ireland, Italy, and Cyprus. There are different summer and winter destinations. In summer, Scotland and Ireland are the most visited. In the summer months, Germans and Scandinavians often travel within the country, mostly on short-term arrangements. The Germans visit Austria in the summer. Winter destinations are mainly Spain and Portugal (60% of arrivals), followed by France, Italy, Turkey, and Cyprus. Golf arrangements are most common from March to May and in October and November. The basic characteristics of European golfers are as follows:

- The majority of this population is between 40 and 60 years old.
- Depending on the country they come from, 50-70% are men (gentlemen), 10-40% women (ladies), 10-30% children (juniors).
- Travel in small groups, usually with golf friends and / or members.
- They want to be accommodated in hotels, apartments or villas, higher categories (4 to 5 stars or luxury categories).
- Prefer accommodation next to the playground, with desirable transfers up to 30 minutes' drive.
- 55% of golfers generally choose 7-day arrangements.
- 25% of golfers go on extended weekends several times a year.
- 20% of golfers go to more distant destinations, on trips of 8 days or more.
- In seven days, they want to play 4 to 6 rounds on 3 to 5 pitches.

Golfers spend on average between 150 and 200 EUR per day, and in better resorts up to 250 EUR. The most common are seven-day arrangements, whose prices are around 1500 EUR, while for weekend prices the arrangements range from 300 to 600 EUR, depending on the type of transport and the distance to the destination. Prices for longer arrangements are usually from 2,000 to 5,000 EUR. Reservations are usually made by phone (46%), online (32%) or in an agency (22%), 50% of reservations are made 1 to 6 months before the trip, 40% longer than 6 months (usually group trips) and 10% within a month. Today, more and more attention is paid to the ecological sustainability of the golf course. Field management has been improved, especially in the use of water, fertilizers, and pesticides. The water needed for irrigation is provided exclusively from sources that do not endanger the water supply. Top drainage systems contribute to this. The same goes for sophisticated watering systems that save a lot of water and make the most of it. New types of grasses have been developed that do not require large amounts of water. Elin Pelin Golf Club has a golf academy, which includes a driving range, training simulators, a 2-hole training course, video systems for computer analysis, etc. The Golf Academy is organizing a basic training course called "Green Card". This course lasts 12 hours, after which the student gets the opportunity to play golf with other players and has the opportunity to play on all other golf courses. In addition to the golf course, a spa has been built that includes a Finnish and herbal sauna, a steam bath, a shower, an ice room, a relaxation area, a gym, and a swimming pool.

5.2.2 Marketing

Marketing in tourism is fundamentally different from marketing other types of products in three important ways: 1) tourism is primarily a service activity, where services are intangible and where it is more difficult to conduct quality control and evaluation of experience. 2) Instead of the product approaching the consumer, the consumer must travel to the product or resource and 3) people usually participate and attend more than one activity during their journey. Marketing activities at the tourist destination level aim to support the basic elements of the destination so that potential tourists are attracted to visit the destination, as well as to use services within the destination, which ensure that the expectations of visitors / tourists are met within the destination. It is necessary to create awareness of the destination, to build a strong and recognizable brand as well as to achieve cooperation in the promotion and sale of the destination. This should lead to an increase in the number of arrivals and overnight stays of guests throughout the year, i.e., to an increase in the occupancy rate of accommodation facilities. Positioning and branding are the starting points of great importance for the long-term position and development of the tourist destination. Positioning Elin Pelin and Leskovac as tourist destinations on the domestic and foreign markets is the main task of marketing activities. Market positioning of a destination is an image of the destination in the minds of guests. In strategic documents, the desired market positioning is defined with the intention to ensure its connection with the vision and to provide a basis for the elements of marketing planning. Market positioning is always and to the greatest extent based on the elements of the existing identity and resource specifics. The development of tourism and increasing the competitiveness of tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac is in direct correlation with the number of tourists and the realized tourist traffic. Given the cyclical movement of the number of tourists in recent decades, increasing the number of foreign and domestic tourists is an important marketing goal, and the realization of which requires designing marketing activities and directing them towards generating demand for key tourism products. Having in mind the attitude of the business sector that marketing activities are one of the reasons for the unfavourable climate for doing business in the tourism market, improving the marketing management of a tourist destination is one of the marketing goals. Destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac can meet the needs of different market segments (tourists) and above their current profile of the average guest. This is possible thanks to the rich cultural and natural resources, its multiculturalism, way of life, geographical position near large markets and easy accessibility. With a joint effort, it is necessary to position the destination Elin Pelin and Leskovac as a destination for short vacations based on festivals, gastronomy and other business and facilities. These actions are realized through strategic tasks, divided into three interconnected units: Marketing infrastructure, marketing communication and sales and commercialization system. These strategic tasks are further elaborated through initiatives of different priorities. Together they form a marketing action that is in the function of a common vision and strategic objectives.

Development of marketing infrastructure: it is essentially a process of creating the desired image of tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac, i.e., defining its competitive identity. Image represents an important distinctive ability of the destination, i.e., the essence of its value, which the management managed to use to create a favourable market position. The result is the perception of existing and potential visitors about the benefits and experiences that the destination provides compared to competing destinations. Respectable image and reputation ensure the creation of tourist satisfaction, their return to the destination, spreading positive attitudes to new products and brands, in existing and new markets. The degree of tourist satisfaction is the most important result of the destination image and represents a subjective assessment of the perceived overall experience in relation to expectations and perceptions about the characteristics of a destination. Tourists perceive each destination as a brand composed of numerous products and services. Their initial perceptions of the destination are formed on the basis of previous experience, oral propaganda (information from other tourists) and commercial sources. The image of a destination consists of two related components: perceptual (cognitive) assessment, which refers to the knowledge and beliefs of individuals (tourists) and emotional assessment, which refers to the feelings of individuals towards a specific destination. Together, these components create an image for the tourist, which is the basis for future purchases and choices. Consumer perceptions are formed depending on the identity of the destination and the marketing strategies of the holders of the tourist offer.

Elin Pelin and Leskovac destinations offer different experiences that need to be structured in a way that allows the market to more easily position Elin Pelin and Leskovac as tourist destinations. Tourist products must be easily recognizable with a special identity (new logo, brand name, slogan). The new brand must be understood as the highest possible value for the offered price. The value of the brand derives from the perception of consumers, in a way that develops the perception of Elin Pelin and Leskovac as tourist destinations of good quality and value. Quality and value are achieved through coordinated promotion, good presentation of cultural and historical attractions and environmental protection. The future brand must represent a unique set of experiences, feelings, benefits, and images that create market recognition and a connection with guests. It must be clearly differentiated from the competition and, with a developed value system, it must have an elaborate visual identity. Once a brand is created, it is necessary to manage it professionally, provide consistent communication and tone of communication, proper application of the brand and visual standards according to defined criteria. It is necessary to revise the existing materials and identify whether there are substantive overlaps of materials between individual cities, municipalities, and destinations. It is necessary to harmonize all materials (visually, content-wise, and informatively), while respecting the newly created brands and their application. It is necessary to centralize all materials for which it makes sense, because they promote similar resources, attractions, or products. The audit needs to identify the types of publications that need to be rejected and those that need to be retained and improved. After the audit, it is necessary to determine the requirements for new types of printed materials. Some of them can be catalogues, brochures, or guides (wine and gastronomy, events, culture, short breaks, etc.). The website is the first contact of a potential guest with the destination and an opportunity to inspire and inform every visitor. The content of a good tourist site must be relevant, informative, and current, and at the same time the form in which it is presented is important. The shared website must be interactive, visually clear, and intuitive, must provide ease of movement through the structure and content, as well as support access from mobile devices. The site must be a central place to inspire and provide all relevant information as well as a place from which later, depending on interest, the guest can go to other, connected websites of service providers, attractions, and active presence on social networks. Along with the popular and ubiquitous Facebook page, it is necessary to inspire guests with pictures and video content. An Instagram profile and a YouTube channel are the two most appropriate models of inspiration in this regard. Social networks are channels of information, content creation and user engagement. They enable fast and personalized communication, but also the implementation of specific marketing campaigns. Communication through social networks must be constant, inspiring, relevant and encourage the engagement of guests and the sharing of content. In order to create content, it is necessary to start a blog, which will be the main place of inspiration. The blog is written and edited by locals, and they write about different topics in an interesting, innovative, creative, and fun way. The blog provides all the relevant information that creates awareness of the destination, inspires guests, and makes them want to visit and visit. Content can also be used and shared via social networks thus increasing visibility and market reach. It is necessary to create an attractive database of multimedia content of tourist destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac. It is important to take into account the brand and its attributes, tourist attractions, products and experiences of the region. Multimedia content should not only be a presentation of the offer and scenography, but it should also evoke emotions and experiences. It is necessary to constantly enrich the mentioned base, as well as to use it in the promotion of individual destinations.

Development of marketing communication: In order to reduce the possibility of error, it is important to define which markets have the greatest potential for the current and future portfolio of tourism products destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac. The objective is to better understand the habits and needs of tourists from key markets. influence the change of the average guest profile so that both destinations begin to attract guests who bring more income. By collecting relevant and fresh quantitative and qualitative information on tourism of both destinations (demand and supply characteristics, competition, intermediaries, guest perception, image testing, etc.), as well as other information important for the development and promotion of tourism as a whole and / or individual products, improve your own information system. For this purpose, constant communication, and cooperation of key tourist actors of the destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac is necessary. Both destinations have a strong need to develop a professional communication strategy and tactics related to target segments and strategic markets.

Currently, destinations lack recognizability and awareness of destinations outside the regional and national framework. In the coming period, it is necessary to professionally manage public relations in strategic and priority markets in order to create awareness and influence the image of the destination. Here it is necessary to focus on journalists who cover general, but also specialized topics related to defined tourist products. It is necessary to ensure that consistent messages are sent and that the image is associated with already known brands. Special attention must be paid to the control and uniformity of online content (blogs, multimedia content, social networks, etc.), as well as to issues related to events (their internationalization and timely promotion) and product offerings (recognizability, differentiation).

Development of sales and commercial systems: Successfully managed tourist destinations attract future investors, and with their development improve the image of the destination, and thus the quality of life for the local population. The tourist area of Elin Pelin and Leskovac needs support and leverage for active tourism management in a sustainable and competitive way. The process of finding the optimal model of tourist destination management Elin Pelin and Leskovac would involve a collaborative approach of all key involved private and public sector entities related to the development of tourism in both destinations. The Joint Tourism Working Group established through the Magic of Synergy project can serve as a starting point for the development of a destination management organization. The purpose of this organization is to help tourists and intermediaries in understanding the destination, the attraction of the destination as well as in mediating towards the final providers of products and services. Business meetings (B2B) between different participants of the tourism value chain are a great opportunity to develop awareness of the destination offer. Together with tourist factors, it is possible to participate in fairs of interest with a clear plan and objectives. It is necessary to jointly prepare a fair appearance and to convince business partners abroad about the key attributes of a tourist destination and the professional business culture of local partners. It is desirable to create attractive excursion offers, i.e., testing of tourist products, which are offered to agencies and tour operators.

Table 16 Overview of marketing actions

Area of operation	Action
Marketing infrastructure	Creating a brand and creating an image
	Creating data base
	Photo and film bank
Sales and commercialization system	Development of a common internet portal
	Touristic fairs
	Direct marketing
	Sales manual
	Travel and sightseeing tours for journalists and travel organizers
	Promotional products
	Workshops – Explore Elin Pelin and Leskovac
Communication system	Publications
	Publicity - advertising
	Promotion package
	Promotion catalogue
	Programme or guide for events
Internet marketing	Product and package development seminars
	Organization introduction and monitoring
	Internet promotion

5.3 Action plan

The action plan is the crown of the whole process of planning the sustainable development of tourism within the destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac. This plan is a guide to the dynamics, key tasks and responsibilities of individual actors involved in the preparation and implementation of the Common Strategy. The Action Plan represents a step forward in the development of strategic commitments set out in the Common Strategy. This approach is necessary in order to clearly see the ways to achieve strategic objectives. The action plan reflects the expressed needs and intentions of the key actors in the development of tourism who participated in its development. The action plan presented in the following table is the result of the work and engagement of the Joint Tourism Working Group.

Table 17 . Action plan

No	Project/ action	Project holder and Partners	Time	Finance source	Project budget	Indicator
1	Priority 1. Development of common tourism products					
1.1	Strategic objective 1.1: Improving the cooperation of tourism actors through the development of joint tourism products					
1.1.1	Support for mutual learning, networking and dissemination and promotion of good practice and methodology in the field of sustainable tourism - Annual meetings of the Joint Tourism Working Group	Joint Tourism Working Group	2021-2026	Municipality Elin Pelin, City of Leskovac, TOL	/	Number of held meetings
1.1.2	Exploitation of synergy connecting the festival: Organization of the gastronomic festival "Leskovački roštilj" in Elin Pelin	Municipality Elin Pelin, TOL	2021-2026	Municipality Elin Pelin, TOL	/	Number of tourists / visitors
1.1.3	Exploitation of the synergy connecting the festival: Organization of the festival "Shoppe Folklore Day" in Leskovac.	Municipality Elin Pelin, TOL	2021-2026	Municipality Elin Pelin, TOL		Number of tourists / visitors
1.1.4	Reduce the seasonality of tourism and develop year-round tourism: Tourist product: Leskovac weekend	Travel organizers	2021-2026	Common available EU funds	20000	Number of tourists
1.1.5	Reduce the seasonality of tourism and develop year-round tourism: Tourist product: Shoppe weekend	Travel organizers	2021-2026	Common available EU funds	20000	Number of tourists

No	Project/ action	Project holder and Partners	Time	Finance source	Project budget	Indicator
1.2	Strategic objective 1.2: Alignment and tourist offers according to market requirements					
1.2.1	Creating common tourist products - Paths of tradition	Municipality Elin Pelin, City of Leskovac	2021-2026	Twining town; Bulgarian embassy in Serbia; EU funds.	50.000,99	Number of tourists
1.2.2	Creating joint tourism products – days of local products	Travel organizers	2021-2026	Common available EU funds	30000	Number of tourists
1.2.3	Vocational education, improvement of skills in catering and tourism.	Municipality Elin Pelin	2021-2026	Common available EU funds	10000	Number of held meetings
1.2.4	Completion of construction and commissioning of health trails around Lake Ognyanovo and along the Vučjanka gorge.	Municipality Elin Pelin, City of Leskovac	2021-2023	Common available EU funds	/	Number of tourists
2	Priority 2. Common marketing and promotion					
2.1	Strategic objective: 2.1 Improve the promotion of the destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac and joint tourist products					
2.1.1	Development of a joint marketing strategy and marketing tools for the promotion of tourism products.	Municipality Elin Pelin, TOL	2021-2023	Common available EU funds	33000	Number of users
2.1.2	Development and updating of mobile application and interactive tourist website for all attractions	Municipality Elin Pelin, TOL	2021-2023	Municipality Elin Pelin, TOL	/	Number of users
2.1.3	Development and updating of interactive digital info points and interactive interpretation systems via QR codes (video, audio, tourist information, etc.) for all economically viable attractions	Municipality Elin Pelin, TOL	2021-2023	Municipality Elin Pelin, TOL	/	Number of users
2.1.4	Joint promotion at international regional and local events and competitions	City of Leskovac, Municipality Elin Pelin, TOL	2021-2026	Common available EU funds	10000	Number of held promotions

6. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring of the Common Strategy is a continuous collection of data on the implementation of individual projects in this strategic document, based on a pre-known plan of activities, which includes its temporal and spatial dimension. Monitoring is an ongoing analysis of the progress of the Common Strategy in achieving the planned objectives. The term monitoring is defined as the collection, processing, and analysis of all information on the physical and financial progress of a project to achieve strategic objectives. It provides decision makers in the implementation of development policy, to continuously receive feedback on the implementation of programs and projects, or the results of their implementation. It enables the identification of actual or potential successes, i.e., problems, early enough to implement the necessary changes and adjustments within the programs and projects themselves, i.e., their implementation. The monitoring process is a mandatory part of the implementation of the Strategy, as well as the preparation of regular annual reports of the structures that conduct monitoring. The evaluation of the Common Strategy is a periodic evaluation of its relevance, impact, impact, and effectiveness in terms of pre-defined strategic objectives and individual actions. It reviews the content of individual projects and activities through which the entire plan is implemented and draws conclusions about the success of their implementation. On the other hand, the purpose of evaluation is to make a systematic and, as far as possible, objective assessment of the ongoing or completed project, program or policy, their design, implementation, and results. The intention is to assess the relevance and achievement of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. Monitoring and evaluation are complementary management instruments. It is important to distinguish between monitoring and evaluation indicators. Monitoring indicators provide information on how to use resources, amounts of support, number of users, etc. In this way, monitoring indicators, and especially input and output indicators, enable the preparation of reports on the use of resources and implemented activities. Evaluation indicators refer primarily to performance and impact indicators, as the evaluation takes place after monitoring. The evaluation provides a picture of the effects of support measures and concentrates on the analysis of the effectiveness of the support system itself in terms of achieving strategic objectives. Another potential aspect of evaluation is the assessment of relevance, benefits (compatibility of effects with actual needs) and sustainability (expectations related to long-term effects or impact of individual actions).

6.1 Indicators of sustainable tourism development

The indicators help to monitor the progress towards the set objectives of the Common Strategy. A good indicator produces information that is easy to understand and meaningful. Such information can help managers understand the situation and make decisions about further actions. Defining and using indicators of sustainable tourism was a special topic that was during the preparation of this document and was discussed during the fourth workshop in the process of strategic planning. Workshop participants discussed indicators that will monitor the implementation of the Common Strategy, aware of the fact that the selected indicators should show: the state of the tourism industry (e.g. tourist satisfaction), pressure on the system (e.g. water scarcity, crime rate), the impact of tourism (e.g. impact on communities, deforestation), management reach (e.g. cleaning, destination pollution), effects of management actions (e.g. change in pollution levels, number of returning tourists). The use of such a system of indicators would ensure the prevention of harmful effects, as well as provide a basis for long-term planning and analysis of tourism. When drafting the Strategy and defining the indicators, it was taken into account that they are in accordance with the comparative indicators of sustainable tourism of the European Union, which are classified into five groups: economic indicators show the economic effects of tourism in a tourist place or area; tourist satisfaction implies the degree of tourist satisfaction with the quality of tourist facilities and services provided and their opinion on the attractiveness of resources, the state of the environment and socio-cultural features of the receptive place; social indicators reflect the social integrity of the local community from the aspect of subjective well-being of the domicile population in the tourist region or place; cultural indicators express the degree of preservation of the cultural identity of the local community under the influence of tourists who come from areas with different cultural characteristics; indicators of the state of the environment should provide a picture of the state of the environment and the impacts that tourism has on individual natural resources.

Participants in the strategic planning workshop, members of the Joint Working Group for Tourism, analysed the list of indicators for monitoring the sustainability of destinations Elin Pelin and Leskovac. This list is harmonized with the European system of indicators for tourism in sustainable destinations. After the discussion, the members of the Joint Tourism Working Group adopted a list of 10 indicators at the fourth workshop of Strategic Planning, which will be monitored at the tourist destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac. This list is shown in the table below.

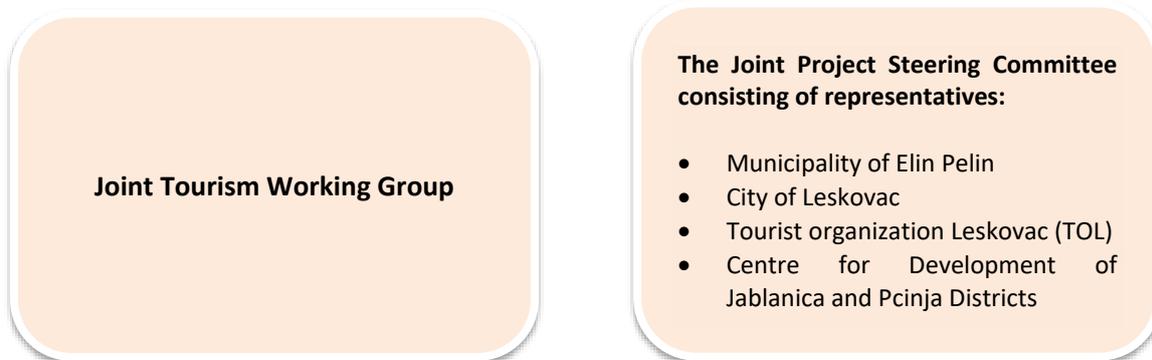
Table 18 Common Strategy Indicators

№	Criteria for sustainability	Indicator name	Unit of measurement
1	Destination management	Customer Satisfaction: Percentage of visitors that are satisfied with their overall experience in the destination	%
2	Economic value	Tourist flow at the destination: Number of tourist nights.	Number
3		Tourist flow at the destination: Daily spending per tourist (accommodation, food and drinks, other services)	EUR/day
4		Tourism supply chain: Percentage of tourism enterprises that are actively taking steps to procure local, sustainable goods and services.	%
5		Quantity and quality of employment: Direct tourism employment as percentage of total employment	%
6		Tourism Enterprise(s) Performance: Average length of stay of tourists (nights)	day
7	Social and Cultural Impact	Community/Social Impact: Number of tourists/visitors per 100 residents	Number
8		Equality/Accessibility: Percentage of commercial accommodation with rooms accessible to people with disabilities	%
9	Environmental Impact	Solid Waste Management: Waste volume produced by destination (tonnes per resident per year)	t/resident
10		Landscape and Biodiversity Protection: Percentage of destination (area in km ²) that is designated for protection	%

Participants in the strategic planning workshop, members of the Joint Tourism Working Group also stressed the importance of regular measurement of indicators, and agreed to monitor them annually, so that comparisons can be made, and trends observed. Care was taken to make the indicators simple and understandable and easily accessible, so it was decided to make the most of existing publicly available data sources. As for the types of indicators, they are defined for different levels of assessment (input parameters / resources, output parameters, results, impact). They will also be presented in a qualitative or quantitative form, each of which provides a different perspective and insight into the assessment. The sources of indicators, in addition to official statistics at the national and local level, and in order to better understand the current situation and make the right decisions are studies, surveys, reports from focus group workshops, etc.

6.2 Institutional and organizational infrastructure

The implementation of the Common Strategy is based on a combination of an action plan, organizational structure, and involvement of tourism actors. The Joint Project Steering Committee and the Joint Tourism Working Group form the institutional framework for the elaboration and adoption of the Common Strategy. The main function of the Joint Steering Committee is to monitor the implementation of the project, financial operations, and sustainability of the project. Also, this committee is responsible for the adoption of the created development policies of sustainable tourism. The members of the Joint Steering Committee are representatives of the project partners and the city of Leskovac. The Board consists of 6 members, 3 from Bulgaria and 3 from Serbia.



The Joint Tourism Working Group consists of tourism actors Elin Pelin and Leskovac. The structure of the Joint Tourism Working Group Development consists of: Travel organizers (3); Accommodation services (5); Support institutions and organizations: local self-government; museums; cultural centres; business support organizations; educational institutions; non-governmental organizations (12). The total number of members is 20, 10 representatives of organizations from both countries that have signed the agreement on the establishment of the Joint Tourism Working Group Development, and thus expressed interest and commitment to participate in the work of this working group. At the last strategic planning workshop, a coordination mechanism and a system for monitoring and evaluating the achievement of the objectives of the Common Strategy were defined and adopted. The joint working group will represent the body that will monitor and follow up the Common Strategy. This body will meet once a year to assess progress in implementing the Common Strategy.

The Joint Steering Committee of the project consists of 6 representatives of the Municipality of Elin Pelin, the City of Leskovac, the Tourist Organization of the City of Leskovac and the Centre for Development of Jablanica and Pcinja Districts. Obligations and responsibilities of this Board arise partly from the obligations and responsibilities that are part of the project within which it was formed and partly from the scope of work of the organizations that make up this Steering Committee. The scope of work of the member organizations of the Joint Steering Committee is especially important in the part of monitoring and monitoring the implementation of the Common Strategy. In this regard, the following is a detailed overview of the member organizations of the Joint Steering Committee.

Municipality of Elin Pelin: The Municipality of Elin Pelin was established in 1978 by Decree no. 2294. The settlement is considered to have existed for more than 550 years. Tourism is the key to the local economy thanks to the favourable natural environment, the availability of catering facilities and the well-established practice of providing tourist services in the summer season. The structure of the municipal administration consists of: The political cabinet, headed by the president (serf), deputy mayors, heads of municipal administrations, presidents of settlements, and deputy presidents. The administration consists of the Secretary, the financial controller, and the chief architect. Further there is general administration and specialized administration with departments for: Spatial planning and construction; investment, construction, and transportation; European policy programs and projects; Education, humanitarian, and social work; Ecology; Taxes and fees; Public administration.

City of Leskovac: The Decision on the City Administration of the City of Leskovac regulates the organization and scope of work of the City Administration of the City of Leskovac (hereinafter: The City Administration), the manner of managing the City Administration, publicity, and other issues relevant to the City Administration. The City Administration performs the original tasks of the City of Leskovac as a unit of local self-government determined by the Constitution, law, Statute, and other regulations. The City Administration also performs tasks entrusted by law within the framework of the rights and duties of the Republic of Serbia. The City Administration: 1. prepares draft regulations and other acts adopted by the City Assembly, the Mayor and the City Council; 2. executes Decisions and other acts of the City Assembly, the Mayor and the City Council; 3. decides in the administrative procedure in the first instance on the rights and duties of citizens, companies, institutions and other organizations in administrative matters within the competence of the City; 4. performs administrative supervision over the execution of regulations and other general acts of the City Assembly; 5. executes laws and other regulations whose execution is entrusted to the City; 6. performs professional and other tasks determined by the City Assembly, the Mayor and the City Council, and 7. performs other tasks determined by law, acts of the City bodies and other regulations. Within the City Administration, organizational units are formed for performing related tasks, which can be basic, special, and narrower organizational units. Departments are formed as basic organizational units for performing related, administrative, professional, and other tasks in the City Administration. Departments are formed according to the type, mutual connection and scope of work, the performance of which ensures efficient and harmonized work in the field for which they are formed. Special organizational units are formed for jobs that require the application of special methods and knowledge and related executive jobs, as well as jobs that by their nature or scope require greater independence. If the nature and scope of work so require, narrower organizational units may be formed within the basic organizational units: sections, and within the department of the group. Offices may be established within the basic organizational unit to perform certain tasks within the competence of the City Administration, especially in connection with the exercise of citizens' rights, the implementation of youth policy, and local development. The following basic organizational units are formed in the City Administration: Department of Finance; Department of General Administration and Joint Affairs; Department of Social Affairs and Local Development; Department of Urbanism; Department for communal-housing affairs, traffic and infrastructure; Department for Property-Legal Affairs and Property; Department of Inspection Affairs; Department of Economy and Agriculture; Department of Environmental Protection; Public Procurement Department; Department for the Affairs of the City Assembly and the City Council; Citizen Service Department - City Service Centre and Communal Police Department.

Tourist Organization of Leskovac (TOL): The Tourist Association "Nikola Skobaljić" was founded in Leskovac in the early sixties, when the Tourist Association of the Municipality of Leskovac originated, and in 1995 the Tourist Organization of the Municipality of Leskovac was organized. The institution grows into the Tourist Organization of the city of Leskovac, with the status of a city. The tourist organization Leskovac was founded in 1995 by the Municipal Assembly of Leskovac as a public entity with the basic purpose of promoting the tourist values of the city in order to be clearly on the tourist map of Serbia. The mission is to position Leskovac, on the domestic and international market, as the heart of Southern Serbia, a multi-ethnic city rich in culture, soothing nature, hospitable people, lively nightlife, excellent cuisine, and attractions in abundance. In addition to the promotion, the Tourist Organization of Leskovac is to carry out activities related to the development, preservation, and protection of tourist values on the territory of Leskovac. Also, TOL provides visitors in Leskovac with information on accommodation facilities, current events in the city, restaurants, and their offer, etc. TOL annually organizes dozens of events and manifestations such as the Leskovac Barbecue Week, the Leskovac Summer, the Leskovac Carnival, the Souvenir Exhibition, the Street Theatre Festival; children's creativity festival; Drum Dum Fest; festival of traditional art, etc. These festivals are visited annually by over a million people. In addition, TOL realizes informative advertising and publishing (tourist guides, tourist maps, books, postcards, souvenirs, etc.).

The Centre for Development of Jablanica and Pcinja Districts is a non-profit company that was founded in 2006 to perform activities in the field of regional development and provide support to micro, small and medium enterprises, and entrepreneurs. By its legal nature, the Centre is an Accredited Regional Development Agency.

The Common Strategy is a planning document for the sustainable development of the tourist destinations of Elin Pelin and Leskovac. Given that strategic planning is an ongoing process, i.e., a continuous flow of project preparation and implementation, each of its phases is crucial for achieving the vision of development and achieving the set strategic objectives. The steps that follow after the adoption by the Joint Steering Committee of the project are: 1) Implementation of the Common Strategy - project implementation; 2) Control / monitoring of the implementation of the Common Strategy and 3) Audit and periodic harmonization of the Common Strategy. The mechanism for implementing the Common Strategy is a complex task that requires good coordination and coordination with a wider range of stakeholders. An overview of the obligations and responsibilities for monitoring the evaluation and periodic review of the Common Strategy is provided below.

Competent body / Organization	Description of duties and responsibilities
The Joint Tourism Working Group	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Holds meetings at least once a year and evaluates the progress and level of implementation of activities from the Common Strategy 2. Amend the action plan. 3. Revises the Common Strategy. A normal annual audit is an update of the action plan if changes in circumstances do not require a change in objectives. In the event of unforeseen circumstances (such as the COVID-19 pandemic), the audit will include a review and possible change / adjustment of the objectives of priorities and actions. The Joint Tourism Working Group has a mandate to review and, if necessary, adjust the Common Strategy according to the procedure it adopts.
Joint Project Steering Committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Holds meetings at least once a year and adopts reports on the implementation of the Common Strategy. 2. Takes measures and makes decisions regarding the implementation of the Common Strategy.
Municipality of Elin Pelin	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organize meetings of the Joint Tourism Working Group every other year. 2. Ensures the presence of members of the Joint Tourism Working Group at the annual meetings in Leskovac. 3. Provides support for the realization of the objectives from the Common Strategy. 4. Collects and analyses sustainable development indicators for the tourist destination Elin Pelin.
City of Leskovac	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organize meetings of the Joint Tourism Working Group every other year. 2. Ensures the presence of members of the Joint Tourism Working Group at the annual meetings in Elin Pelin. 3. Provides support for the realization of the objectives from the Common Strategy.
Tourist organization Leskovac	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collects and analyses sustainable development indicators for the tourist destination Leskovac. 2. Convene annual meetings of the Joint Tourism Working Group and the Joint Project Steering Committee. 3. Prepares material for the work of the representatives of the Joint Working Group and the representatives of the Joint Project Steering Committee. 4. Prepares an annual report on the implementation of the Common Strategy
Centre for Development of Jablanica and Pcinja Districts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitates annual meetings 2. Prepares minutes and reports from the meetings of the Joint Tourism Working Group and the Joint Project Steering Committee.

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Republic Statistical Office of Serbia	https://data.stat.gov.rs/
EUR-Lex	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/
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