

**Sustainable Transport and Tourism
along the Danube**
www.transdanube.eu

WP3: TRANSPORT & TOURISM SYSTEM ANALYSIS
STATUS-QUO / STATE OF THE ART RARIS, SERBIA
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



WP 3/ Action 3.2 and 3.3

**IPA PP2 Regional Agency for Development of Eastern
Serbia - RARIS**

1 Aug 2013



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

0. Introduction

The Status of the Art analysis have been prepared in four steps. First the status-quo of sustainable transportation and tourism was performed along with existing development plans and the legal and financial framework. The following step was the SWOT-analysis in these fields. That was followed by the selection of good practices. The final step was the analysis of the factors to success and the consolidation of the most important findings in the state of the art report.

The report focuses on the main selected tourism hotspots in the Eastern Serbia region, defined as municipalities: Veliko Gradiste, Golubac, Majdanpek, Kladovo and Negotin that are directly on Danube, and municipalities Bor, Sokobanja, Knjzevac and Zajecar that are in the Danube hinter ground.

1. Status-Quo Analysis

The focus region is situated in the eastern portion of Serbia. On the North it borders Romania. On the East it borders Bulgaria. Focus area covers an area between the river of Danube and two international corridors: Corridor X (Serbia) and Corridor IV (Bulgaria).

Seven of ten municipalities are border municipalities and they are Knjaževac, Zaječar and Negotin bordering the Republic of Bulgaria and Veliko Gradište, Golubac, Negotin, Kladovo, Majdanpek bordering the Republic of Romania. In this part of the Country the border line between Serbia and Romania goes along the Danube River. The total length of the border with EU in this area is more than 450 km.

Area comprises 299 settlements with 257 258 residents. Territory of the region is taken as an undeveloped region in the grip of an economic and demographic depression. The unemployment rate was about 10% in 2011 (source: Statistical office of Serbia). However, official figure is more-less unreliable and the true value can reach double than official due to the data that counts in onle registered unemployment in the Bureau for unemployment. Majority of real unemployed are registered as farmers without land.

Transportation

The focus area has no optimal connection to large transport nodes Belgrade and Novi Sad. There is no large railroad network in the region and the existing railroad network and rolling stock are in bad state of repair.

Road network allows bus traffic, but due to the low inhabitanace and low interest for the tourism offer of the region, the bus traffic is not huge.

There are no combinations of transports – bicycles with ships, trains, busses.

There are no international train connections from the region to the neighboring countries. There is a wish expressed by the Public Company “Railroads of Serbia” to connect the railroad of the Eastern Serbia to Vidin, but the project has not developed from the idea still. Railroad network in Eastern Serbia has been developed for the primary purpose of connecting main industrial centers to the main cities in Serbia Niš and Belgrade. So, the network is in fact a railway that goes from Niš to Knjaževac and Zaječar and from Zaječar one railway goes to Negotin and port Prahovo, other goes to Bor (copper production), Majdanpek (copper production too) and then towards Belgrade.

Due to crisis in 90s and 00s in Serbia and reduced economic activities, the state of repair of railroad network in Serbia is bad. The speed is reduced even to 30km/h on some stretches. There is no developed harmonization between other means of transport. The railroads are not electrified, and passenger trains with rolling stock acquired from Sweden and Russia (used train sets) are operating sometimes in very irregular terms. Generally, there are 2 trains per day going from Niš to Zaječar and then to Bor and Majdanek or Prahovo with changes of trains. Trains are generally not widely used for tourism in the Eastern Serbia region.

There are several bus services connecting Kladovo and Negotin with a large number of European cities operating from the town bus stations. These lines are regularly used by passengers that originate from Eastern Serbia and work in Western Europe. The region is served by a number of regional buses that are operated by several operators. Usually, there is a reduction of bus lines during summer school holidays and weekends. Zaječar and Bor have organized – scheduled inner-city bus lines. Bor is having about 5 inner city lines and a line that connects Bor to Borsko Jezero lake for tourism purposes.

The main bicycle route in Eastern Serbia is EuroVelo 6. This route follows Danube through Serbia and runs through municipalities of Veliko Gradište, Golubac, Majdanpek, Kladovo and Negotin. At Donji Milanovac, there is a counter for bicycles installed in 2008.

There is no combination of bicycle tourism with other means of transport – it is not possible to board bicycle on train or bus or ship, without prior notice and special packing and for extra price.

Several mountain bike tracks are recently under development in the region. One is under development through the cross-border project “Mount-a-bike” funded by EU, by the Regional centre for sustainable development from Zaječar, Serbia and Regional Centre for Development of Vidin from Bulgaria. Both partners shall develop mountain bike paths on their territory and connect them between to become a joint mountain bike trail network. Besides, there are several development of mountain bike trails on “Stara Planina” mountain and in Sokobanja spa.

There is no scheduled stops of the larger Danube cruisers in the region due to the under developed infrastructure and services. From time to time, some cruisers stop at Donji Milanovac. Tourists are visiting Lepenski Vir – settlement from neolith. Still, there are no offers for day trips in the region. A tourist ship operated by the hotel Djerdap can be used for sight viewing Danube from the Iron Gate and Negotin on call. At Veliko Gradište, another tourist ship can be rented for sightseeing and daily cruising. Ship operates every day. During 2011 a river line from Belgrade to Đerdap has been established. Smaller ship operates once per month, every 3rd weekend.

Tourism

Nearly all municipalities in the region have their strategic goals that are connected to the development of tourism. There are several tourism hotspots in the Eastern Serbia focus region. Some of the hotspots are on the Danube and some are in the Danube hinterland. Every municipality in the focus region has its own tourism organization, which basically is in charge of the development and promotion of tourism packages and offers in its municipality. Besides municipal tourism organisations there are plans in the region to form two regional tourism organisations that would become destination management organisations in the future.

Several projects have tried to produce a regional tourism offer and to do regional marketing on tourism. As every project, with a completion of it, activities are somehow reduced or completely stop.

Apart from the regional web-site <http://www.traveleastsrbia.org/> that offers information on some tourism packages for the whole region, there is no specialized web-site or organization that deals with tourism issues on regional level.

Another information portal on regional level is <http://www.jugostocnasrbija.rs>. This site presents some information regarding tourism attractions in a part of the region, e.g. accommodation, travel information and similar. By the time of writing, the site doesn't seem to be completed.

Existing Development plans

During 2011 and 2012 the Spatial plan for Eastern Serbia has been developed under guidance of Republic Agency for Spatial Planning of Serbia. The Spatial Plan has been adopted by the Government of Serbia during 2012. The plan includes municipalities Majdanpek, Kladovo, Bor, Negotin, Boljevac, Zaječar, Sokobanja and Knjaževac. Two municipalities Veliko Gradište and Golubac are not covered with this plan, but will be covered by the Spatial Plan of Braničevo region. Main topics of the Spatial Plan for Eastern Serbia are: regional spatial

development, agriculture, forestry, mining, population, network of settlements, public services, economic development, tourism, traffic, water management, infrastructure – energy, telecommunications, communal infrastructure, environment and nature protection.

Although the plan puts a major attention to the road network, there is an expressed need and actions to improve railroad network, Danube river traffic and bicycle traffic in the Eastern Serbia. The Plan has given an attention to the development of the river transport on Danube, together with development of port “Prahovo” at Negotin municipality, which is seen as a multi-modal transport node, port at Donji Milanovac (Majdanpek municipality) and marinas at Tekija and Kladovo. The Spatial plan also gives a reference to the need of promoting and developing bicycle network at “EuroVelo 6” and between EuroVelo6 and connecting routes. In the section of priority activities, the Plan foresees completion and improvement of existing tourism packages, development of new tourism packages and offers. In addition, it foresees development of infrastructure on Danube e.g. ports and marinas, visitor centres... Regarding transport, the Plan foresees as priority activities development of port Prahovo and rehabilitation and modernization of railroad network.

Other important planning document for the region is the Regional Development Strategy, created during 2011. The Strategy has been developed with a help of Karpathian Development Institute from Koshice, Slovakia, by using Slovak Aid Programme. This Strategy focuses on strategic priorities: Agriculture, Energy from renewables, Tourism, Mining, and inter-sectional priorities: Accessibility and transport, Support to the entrepreneurship, Human resources and Environment. This Strategy has put more focus on the need to improve public transport by buses as well by ships and trains. The Strategy foresees development of intermodal transport node and founding an organization that will deal with public transport on a regional level.

2. SWOT-Analysis

Transportation

Within the project Transdanube the SWOT analysis is carried out in order to evaluate the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the development of sustainable mobility in tourism in project area of Eastern Serbia.

Main strengths in the sector of transportation are that the region is on Danube, on EuroVelo6, with a developed network of regional roads. Weaknesses are that the region is not well connected to Belgrade and Novi Sad, main cities in Serbia, that the rail network is in the bad state of repair and that there are no ports on Danube in the region. Good opportunities are that the Government is investing in rehabilitation of roads and in tourism development of the Eastern Serbia. Threats are that the sustainable mobility is not common, that there are no financial instruments for infrastructure projects and that the region is out of the EU, with border crossings that obstruct the traffic.

Tourism

Main strengths in the sector of tourism are the increasing number of bicycle tourists on EuroVelo 6, increasing number of cruising ships on Danube, support by Tourism Organization of Serbia and financial support of the Government to the development of Stara Planina ski resort. Region is not well connected to node A Belgrade (railroads in bad state of repair, deferred maintenance of roads, no ship line) and other regions in Serbia offers more and are better connected to nodes A, low number of tourists, no subventions for development of tourism packages and sustainable mobility and the legal framework not sufficient or clear are the main opportunities to the development of tourism.

Development plans

Region has development plans, regional and local, prepared in last 2-3 years, and there is an increasing focus in the region on cross-border cooperation projects with Romania and Bulgaria and on transnational projects. However, development plans do not comprise sustainable mobility and there are no planned initiatives to stimulate tourists to use public transport.

Organizational and legal framework & funding options

The region of South-East Serbia is in establishment phase, and three regional development agencies operating in the region of South-East Serbia. Informal region of East Serbia (8 municipalities of Borski and Zaječarski District) operating on several projects, sometimes joined by municipalities Veliko Gradište and Golubac. No organization deals with public transport on a regional level and there is no funding scheme in the region for the project implementation. There is some support from the foreign donors and Government to the region, but still there are no financial schemes to support sustainable mobility projects in the country.

3. Factors of success (SoA-analysis)

As a result of the Status-quo, the SWOT-analysis and the identified good practices, general success factors have been identified. These factors are a valuable source of information for all further steps in Transdanube project for the Eastern Serbia region.

Mainly, the sustainable mobility have to become more known as a principle in the Eastern Serbia region, by the support of municipalities, regional agencies and the Government activities. Unexisting financial support and unclear legal issues should be overcome in the future period. Cross-border cooperation with the surrounding regions in Romania and Bulgaria should be increased and should result with joint projects and finally with joined tourism packages based on sustainable mobility vision.