

**Tendencies in the development of world tourism, European regulations
and the challenges for Bulgarian tourism**

Prof. Dr. Svetla Rakadzhiyska¹

University of Economics - Varna, Varna, Bulgaria (in English, style: !authors)

svetlar@ue-varna.bg

"Documents are not products"

Alex Levy, founder and president of Atmo Inc.
San Francisco

Abstract

An analysis of Bulgarian tourism will be made in the context of world tourism development and the European regulations.

Keywords: world tourism, tendencies, "European Green Deal" and ESC regulations, Bulgarian sector of tourism

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Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic caused drastic negative consequences for tourism - a very large decline in tourist travel, loss of jobs and therefore of skilled personnel who moved to other industries, respectively negligible revenues for the tourism business in destinations that received a limited number of tourists.

The lifting of the restrictions that had confined people to their homes during the pandemic has triggered an across-the-board increase in tourist travel around the world, with double-digit growth for leading emitting markets.² However, an imbalance has emerged between large-scale tourism demand and still limited supply, mainly due to a lack of staff but also of material and technical capabilities, mainly in terms of air transport and some of the most sought-after tourist attractions. This new environment has led to a direct increase in the prices of transport and other tourist services, as well as to an indirect increase in prices due to the unfavourable geopolitical environment (large-scale warfare, disrupted supply chains, terrorist attacks, etc.), generating high prices for energy, food, and household services and a corresponding reduction in the standard of living of a significant part of the world's population. Independently, of particular importance for the development of tourism, and for the existence of humanity in general, are the increasingly frequent, widespread and devastating effects of

¹ Emeritus part-time professor, Tourism Department, University of Economics, Varna

² According to the UNWTO News Release from Madrid, (19.012024), 88% of the pre-pandemic level of development has been reached in 2023 with full recovery expected by the end of 2024. According to the UNWTO Tourism Confidence Index Survey, for 67% of the professionals involved, 2024 will be better than 2023, 28% believe it will be the same as 2023 and only 5% fear that the results will be lower than 2023. Tourism's direct contribution to global GDP in 2023 is 3% vs. 4% in 2019. International tourism proceeds are \$1.4 trillion or 93% vs. 2019. Tourism spending from the top emitting markets for the first half of 2024 is up +40% for the UK, +38% for Germany, +34% for Australia, +32% for the US, +28% for Canada, and +26% for Italy, respectively. Notably, India's international tourism spending grew +86% in the first half of 2024 alone. Europe, the world's most visited region, reached 94% of its 2019 level thanks mainly to intra-regional tourism and significant tourist arrivals from the US as a result of the strong dollar. The share of incoming tourist travels to Europe is 61.7%, incl. of the European Union (EU) – 74.1% of European inbound tourism. In terms of revenues, Europe has a share of 53.2% incl. EU - 69.67% of Europe receipts.

climate change: prolonged droughts, fires and floods, hurricanes, intense glacier melt, etc.³ In spite of the difficulties, people choose tourist travel as a kind of "vent" from the problems of everyday life. Tourism demand continues to grow. The choice of popular destinations has reinforced the effect of overtourism, which emerged as a phenomenon before the Covid-19 pandemic, and on this basis the protests of local communities against this phenomenon increased (Amsterdam, Barcelona, Venice, Madrid, Malaga, Canary Islands, Prague, etc.). More and more actively, the various world, regional and national governing bodies are committed to translating the declarations and decisions of their various forums over the years (from 1987 to the present day) on sustainable development of tourism and its environmental, socio-cultural and economic effects into real action. Thus, in June 2021, the G7 countries agreed to make climate reporting mandatory for business. In this regard, there are also the latest ambitious regulations of the European Commission (EC), respectively the European Travel and Tourism Commission (ETC), related to tourism.

The present study is an attempt to analyse and assess, on the basis of European documents, factual data from secondary sources and the opinions of professionals, the possible actions of the Bulgarian authorities and the tourism business to ensure a sustainable future of the "Tourism" sector in the conditions of operation of the ESG standards. For this purpose, the methods of theoretical, comparative and critical analysis, synthesis, as well as prognostic approach are applied to formulate proposals for change.

1. Tendencies in the Development of World Tourism

In the UNWTO Expert Paper (2015) "Tourism Towards 2030", it is predicted that countries defined as developing economies will welcome 58% of international tourists in 2030. Europe will continue to be the most visited destination and Northeast Asia the most visited sub-region. In the first half of 2024, inbound travel to 67 of the 120 monitored destinations is already showing exceptional growth compared to 2019: Qatar - 147%, Albania - 93%, El Salvador - 81%, Saudi Arabia - 73%, Moldova - 50%, Tanzania - 49%. The growths in revenue realised in local currency and at current prices for 47 out of 63 destinations are also significant: Albania - 128%, Serbia - 126%, Tajikistan - 85%, Pakistan - 76%, Montenegro - 70%, Republic of North Macedonia - 60%, Portugal - 57%, Turkey - 55%, Colombia - 54%. The leadership is held by Saudi Arabia - 207% and El Salvador - 168%.⁴

According to Forbes (2020)⁵, people are increasingly talking about so-called "green" travel, which seeks to reduce the carbon footprint of flying or other services.⁶ Information on little-known destinations is growing, with a view to dispersing tourist flow towards the most popular places marked by over tourism (preferences for adventure travel in Georgia and Saudi Arabia are growing). In terms of type of travel, according to ABTA (Association of British Tour Operators), there is a growing demand for 'slow' tourism, tailor-made tours, eco-oriented and socially conscious trips. For the entire tourism sector, increasingly referred to as the Visitor Economy, a zero carbon footprint will be sought through the use of solar energy and luxury without prodigality. Increased alternative transport services

³ World leaders identify the top 10 future risks to humanity as follows: the first five are environmental: extreme weather events; critical change in Earth systems; biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse; natural resource scarcity; pollution. 3 technological risks are noted - misinformation, adverse outcomes of AI technologies, cyber insecurity. The remaining two risks are social in nature - forced migration and social polarisation. Not less important are the risks of economic nature, which are indicated separately, but it depends on their happening or not happening whether humanity will have the opportunity to make the necessary huge investments to overcome the above mentioned leading risks. The strongest concern is the economic downturn - 33%, followed by disruption of supply chains of critical goods and resources at 25%, disruption of food supply chains at 18%, disruption of energy supply chains at 14%, public debt problems at 14%, skills or labour shortages at 13%, institutional collapse in the financial sector at 7%, bursting of the property bubble at 4% and bursting of the technology bubble at 4%. See www.bglobal.bg, p.6, no.2, 2024

⁴ <https://eturbonews.com/global-tourism-has-recovered-to-96-of-pre-pandemic-levels/>, by Harry Johnson, Sept. 19, 2024 (Accessed 09.10.2024)

⁵ Quoted in the newspaper "Cherno More" from 13.01.2020.

⁶ To encourage green travel, single-use plastic products are banned at Dubai airports.

will be sought⁷ by train, bicycle and boat at the expense of air and road transport. The development trends of tourism in the world will be mainly influenced by demographic dynamics, technology, artificial intelligence (AI) and climate change. Additionally, the formation and dispersion of tourist flows will be related to the geopolitical situation.

In the "Survey of Consumer Travel Trends" by Travel port (2023) - "What Consumers Want" is noticed: "An Easy Modern Travel Retail Experience. For 93% it is making it easier to find the best products, with the best sellers being those who save them time - having what you want exactly when you want it; 83% of young consumers aged 18-41 expect more human touch and assistance; 67% to buy online; 59% - getting exactly what they want is more important than how much they will pay for it." 49% of those taking longer travels pay more for sustainability as climate change and sustainability are at top of their thoughts and 60% will choose indirect transport options to save carbon emissions; 33% of tourists will travel 2-3 hours longer to save carbon emissions at 19% of older people; 53% shop online every day or week – they value immediate purchase. For 41% the "now" factor is important for online sales as well as for 44% of offline sales. Much more time is spent searching rather than buying. For 47%, ease of entry to the relevant site to buy is important; 26% prefer video. For 31% of young buyers "I want to be understood" is an important condition for purchase, 51% want personalised offers, and for 90% of buyers the most important condition for purchase is clarity and transparency of the transaction - that there are no unpleasant "surprises". 77% of people know how to use a chat bot but don't always want to. Only about 25% of the theoretical "digital natives" use chat bots more often. Nearly 75% of younger respondents expect more human interactions - to "chat" with a human, and this also applies to 83% of older respondents; 84% of 18-41 year olds will pay more for nature-friendly travel options, as will 55% of tourists aged 42+, whether for vacation or business travel.

Data from Eurobarometer Surveys (Tourism): Preferences of Europeans Towards Tourism (Flash Eurobarometer Report, October, 2021) shows that Europeans select a tourist destination in three aspects: culture - 44%, natural features - 43% and price of the whole trip - 43%. Purchasing professional accommodation (hotel: bed and breakfast) on online platforms is preferred by 31%. They are joined by 25% who purchase other travel-related services. The most preferred source for information is friends, colleagues and relatives; 82% are willing to change their habits to support sustainable tourism, 55% to use local products, 36% to use eco-friendly transport, 35% to pay more to protect nature or the well-being of local communities. According to European Travel Commission's Quarterly Report (Q4/2023) "European Tourism Trends & Prospects" EU residents spent 94% of their trips inside European Union; car is the dominant means of transport; over 2 of 3 intra EU tourism nights are spent in rented tourist accommodation; more than 1 in 4 trips are made in July and August; cruise ships are popular for trips to Estonia and Sweden.

In an article titled "Generations as consumers", in the magazine "BGlobal" no.1 of 2021, p. 93 it is stated that the generational behavior of the "Millennials" and generation "Z", who are active users of tourist services, is strongly oriented towards supporting sustainable development: 70% are willing to pay more for products from local producers to help them survive; 60% are willing to buy from big brands with care for their employees; 40% of Millennials are strongly attracted to businesses with a positive impact on society and the environment; 37% opt out of companies with unethical behaviour.

In the time of AI, virtual and augmented reality, the future behaviour of the "Alpha" generation, which will be involved independently in tourist consumption after a few years, should not be overlooked. For this generation, the Westport Library's definition of "An Armchair Traveler" i.e., someone who discovers a place or location he/she views through a travel program on TV, the Internet,

⁷ Reduction of domestic flights in France on account of the use of high-speed trains, which represent a well-organised system in the country, of car-sharing (without "Uber"), i.e. in one's own car or in another driver's car, which leads to fewer cars on the road, less congestion and less exhaust pollution. Cycling is gaining momentum with a growth of 140% between 2014 and 2018. It is interesting what is meant by "boat travel" since cruises on huge liners, perceived as significant polluters of water spaces, are seeing significant growth.

a website or by reading travel books after a Google clip, is more than likely. Tourism businesses need to be aware of this kind of generational behaviour.

The tendency of the new tourist behaviour of the ultra-rich 1% of the world's population stands out more and more clearly.⁸ The new fashion is "Surf and Turf" - shunning overly mundane destinations, secluding oneself on a yacht, on one's own private island or in giant beachfront mansions that guarantee voluntary isolation. This trend, however, runs counter to all the socially important objectives for the development of sustainable tourism, depriving local communities of the disposal of the natural assets adjacent to their territory.

The identification of a leading goal and motive when undertaking a tourist trip at the same time as the search for various attractions in the visited destination, in order to have satisfying, personal experiences, shape the characteristics of the modern hybrid tourist. This fact places before the tourist supply the need to combine elements of different types of tourism in the creation of personalized offers. At the same time, in order to ensure sufficient positive effects of the **Visitor Economy** in the effective utilization of the available capacities of tourist resources, it is important to ensure mass sales. On this basis another specific trend can be formulated - the **transformation of mass tourism into tourism of social or interest groups** (with the help of successful marketing).

The European Environment Agency (2019) predicts that by 2100, rising temperatures will create better conditions for marine tourism in spring and autumn in southern regions and, accordingly, for the northern ones in the summer. Revenues for southern maritime destinations will be lower by 0.45% of GDP, while for northern ones they will increase by 0.32% of GDP.

In tourism practice, a new phenomenon is observed, which is becoming more and more large-scale - the formation of a secondary market for tourism services (travel). Early bookings are made at advertised promotional terms by sellers and then, as the dates for the trip and/or some additional services/events in the chosen destination approach, resales are offered by buyers at much higher prices (a variant of the shared economy perhaps). At this stage it is difficult to judge whether the normal tourist business is damaged or not.

N. Vanilov (2024) in "Markets from Different Angle" notes that development trends will be mainly determined by demographic dynamics, causing increasing demand for food, healthcare and biotechnology, technology, artificial intelligence (AI) and climate change. The prioritisation of each of these factors for individual activity sectors and companies will likely be determined by the specifics of particular activities. According to a 2022 „Morningstar“ survey, 85% of the 500 largest institutional investors in the US rank sustainability (ESG) factors as materially important in their investment decisions.

2. "European Green Deal" and the ESG Requirements for Tourism

The dynamics of the processes taking place in the world require a new, more flexible behaviour of the tourism business in the conditions of intensified competitive struggle and shortened reaction time. The complex negative effects of climate change are the reason why climate has become the focus of corporate sustainability. European public decision-makers at the highest level are paying particular attention to the actions that need to be taken to maintain Europe as the world's leading tourist destination in the new climatic, geopolitical, demographic and economic environment through decarbonisation, with the ambitious goal of significantly reducing its carbon footprint (50% by 2035 and '0' % by 2050), as stated in the so-called 'European Green Pact'. Particular attention in connection with the regulations, which are also mandatory for the tourist business, should be paid to Directive (EC)2022/2464 on compliance with and reporting on ESG (ecological, social, governance) standards, which are mandatory and in force from January 2024. A large number of environmental indicators will measure how much

⁸ Quoted in the newspaper "24 hours" of 12.08.2023, p. 27.; According to UBS, there are 2,500 billionaires registered in 2023, compared to only 420 in 1995; Larry Ellison, the eccentric co-founder of the Oracle corporation buys 98% of the Hawaiian island of Lanai for 300 million dollars, turns it into a resort for the extremely rich and chases away the people who have lived there for generations (quoted in Bloomberg Businessweek Bulgaria, May 2022, p.95-97)

and what kind of energy is used and how much of it is from renewable sources, what is the carbon footprint of a relevant activity, what materials are used in the supply chain, etc. The social aspect of companies' behaviour will be sought in fair payment to employees and suppliers, the use of child and unregulated labour, policies to protect employees' rights, integration of minority and socially vulnerable groups, i.e. responsibility towards people and their social environment. With regard to the third component of standards related to corporate governance, protection of the transparency of decision-making will be sought, whether the interests of the different interested groups are taken into account - employees, partners, customers, local communities, etc. The order of first involvement of the business in the preparation of the reports on the groups of indicators is also defined. Around 50 000 companies with more than 250 employees and/or a turnover of more than €40 million or listed on the stock exchange have been identified as first reporters. The second group of companies with fewer than 250 employees, a turnover of less than €40 million and not listed on the stock exchange will be included in 2026. SMEs in the tourism business also fall into this group. Micro enterprises are excluded at this stage. The so-called Taxonomy of EU sets the criteria for determining the sustainability of economic activities. The objectivity of the information submitted will be certified by an auditor's signature. Protection is sought against so-called 'greenwashing' or unfair practices in relation to the definition of a 'green' company. According to compliance or non-compliance with the requirements, the respective businesses (companies) will receive incentives or penalties.

Improving the data management and reporting capabilities for ESG standards is seen by the initiators of Directive (EC)2022/2464 as the best way to strengthen the integration between sustainable development goals and overall business objectives.

According to the expert **N. Ognyanova (2024)** "Businesses need to adapt to new climate challenges in record time, against a backdrop of increasing climate threats to companies operating globally/.../To manage the growing number of metrics that were once voluntary disclosed and are now mandatory, companies will need to invest in the automation and industrialization of ESG data and metrics reporting."

In order to comply with the Directive (EU)2022/2464, which entered into force, and in accordance with the deadlines set for its transposition into Bulgarian accounting legislation, the 50th National Assembly adopted the Draft Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law for Accounting, which enters into force on 06.07.2024. By Decree of the President Rumen Radev, it was promulgated in the State Gazette, No. 72 of 27.08.2024. The above mentioned document concerns the reporting and auditing of financial and "non-financial" procedures (ESG standards), i.e. the management aspects of companies directly related to ensuring sustainability - decarbonisation, digitalisation, social commitments. At this stage, for the tourism sector, the requirements apply to companies that are joint stock companies.

However, various experts and analysts are not convinced that the mentioned Directive will contribute to a "greener Europe". Monitoring the opinions of various professionals on the nature and content of the European Green Deal reveals its negative aspects:

R. Petkova (2024): "ESG regulations have already come into force. But after all the hype now it is time to see the business opportunities they could provide. The widespread acronym ESG encompasses the three keywords for green transition - environmental, social and corporate governance. The non-financial reporting about a company's sustainability performance thus comes at a cost to companies seeking to meet the benchmark. To a large extent, ESG focuses on the financial risks and opportunities presented to companies/.../ The "Green Deal" is a fact. but we ask ourselves: What is the green future of Europe? The original idea of the "Green Deal" was that it would lead to growth in Europe. Five years later, we are witnessing an economic slowdown, partly caused by highly ambitious "green policies". One of the most important missions facing Europe is to regain its competitiveness. The most striking example is the damage that restrictive green policies have done to the automotive industry. **In Europe, the image of internal combustion engines has been destroyed by political forces. The shake-up of the industry in Europe has led legislators to start rethinking the ban on**

internal combustion engines. The first priority of the new EC (24-29) is a new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness, which includes easing the conditions for doing business”;

B. Rashev (2024): “For Europe to be a place that invests and produces, it must **have sustainable resources of its own and very cheap energy. We do not have both.**⁹ It remains inexplicable how the economy of the union will be maintained when we clearly **have confrontation of green policies and market economy principles.** Europe's green policies are being imposed at state level and resemble the policies of 30 years ago.”

Radan Kanev (2024): /.../ “the Green Deal laws have moved very quickly away from the original concept of accelerated growth. They became a set of highly restrictive and pro-inflationary norms. The money intended for industrial modernisation and green transition was spent mostly on recovery from the pandemic, but the restrictive measures remained /.../ many parties won the European elections with an agenda for a partial revision of the Green Deal legislation /.../ **Most likely that climate legislation in the EU will be seriously delayed and the already adopted legislation amended in a more conservative direction, which is not necessarily a bad thing.** /.../ Climate policy can only be global - it can be seen that measures adopted by a single economic power cannot deliver results on their own.”

Mario Draghi (former European Central Bank chief and Italian prime minister) in his report on the future of European Competitiveness (**09.09.2024**) proposes **reforming EU governance, improving coordination and reducing the high regulatory and administrative burdens that hamper the competitiveness of EU businesses.** He underlines how regulation is seen by more than 60% of EU companies as an obstacle to investment, with 55% of SMEs flagging regulatory obstacles and the administrative burden as their greatest challenge. The report advocates for a **new industrial strategy, calling for unprecedented levels of investment and the introduction of new common debt to support Europe's industrial and defence needs.** The report sets out the **four building blocks** of the proposed industrial strategy: **full implementation of the Single Market; alignment of industrial, competition and trade policies to ensure that they work together as part of a coherent strategy, with a focus on supporting sectors rather than individual companies; massive investment will be essential to the industrial strategy, which will require the mobilisation of private finance; integration on Europe's capital markets, enabling high household savings to be channeled into productive investment within the EU.**

It is logical to assume that the cited report has been commissioned to be developed in view of the real problems facing the EU, accompanying the economy of the Single Market economy and the decreasing competitiveness, the lack of investment to meet the ambitious policy goals set out in the “European Green Deal”¹⁰, digitalisation and the technological race mainly with the US and China¹¹ to support fundamentally the EC in the years of the new mandate. The result is that the EC is proposing a new document - a **“Manifesto” for the EU Mandate 2024 - 2029 “A NEW Consensus for Change”.** A **“Tourism Manifesto - Tourism in Transition”** has been developed specifically for the tourism sector, which defines tourism as a **Visitor Economy.** The document states that: “The Tourism manifesto is an alliance of over 70 public and private sector organisations working to build consensus on policy priorities and support good practice. The visitor economy covers all regions and multiple sectors: leisure and business travel, culture and gastronomy, accommodation, meetings, exhibitions and events. It

⁹ According to Rolf Kuby, Director General of Euromines - “At the moment, Europe is sourcing only 3% of all the raw materials it needs.” See mag. BGlobal, no.8, 2024, p.71

¹⁰ Kevin Crowley in the article “Tiptoeing through the Oil Fields” (Bloomberg Businessweek Bulgaria, 2024, p.21) share that “America is currently the world's top oil producer, pumping almost 50% more crude each day than Saudi Arabia. In reality, the US government has far less control over its oil companies than its peers in Saudi Arabia, Russia and other major oil producing countries, where state bureaucrats make the decision to turn spigots on or off.

¹¹ Mario Draghi's report highlights the EU's weak productivity growth and the widening between EU and US GDP levels. Only four European companies are among the world's top 50 tech companies and the EU's share of global tech revenues fell from 22% in 2013 to 18% in 2023, while the US's share increased from 30% to 38% in this context; EU companies still face electricity prices that are 2 or 3 times higher than in the US and natural gas prices are 4 to 5 times higher.

delivers benefit to urban and rural communities across the region. More coordinated EU action is needed to channel investment effectively, to support value-adding, drive innovation and help our interconnected ecosystem decrease negative impact. Characterised by micro, SMEs and complex supply chains the sector needs a clear and proportionate approach to enable decarbonisation and improve environmental performance: single reporting tool; harmonised core environmental metrics; de-risk transition-make change easier and less expensive and provide more business certainty; drive public and private investment in infrastructure and transitional technology. The success factors for the **EU Vision and Strategy for EU Tourism in 2030** are: **identify the overall aims for European tourism and visitor economy, define "good" looks like, agree a clear strategy and ensure an enabling framework of smart regulation, good practice and funding in support.**

In the document "**Path way for Tourism Transition**" 424 pledges are nominated to be support for all types of organisations involved: 111 "green transition" (26%); 101 "policy and governance" (24%); 77 "digital transition" (18%); 76 "skills and resilience" (18%); 54 "stakeholder support" (13%); 5 "other" (1%).

The Rome International Conference on "Sustainable Tourism in Europe, Transition Path for Tourism and European Tourism Agenda 2030" (20.11.2023) underline that 3.5 million companies - 99% SMEs, servicing 57% internal tourists and 46% international tourists, visiting Europe, need promotion for their competitiveness, for cooperation between member states, for sharing good practices. The European Parliament and the Council of Europe will endorse specific measures to implement the activities of member states to achieve the set objectives. EC expert group, monitoring mechanism and dashboard + 30 updated and new indicators will support green, digital, socio-economic tourism demand and supply descriptors.

The above-mentioned texts, despite their declarative nature (such is the essence of the documents), reveal the need to prepare the Bulgarian tourism business to comply with them as well as with the mandatory ESG reporting while protecting its specificity - a prevailing number of micro and SMEs on the one hand, and on the other - different stakeholders taking part in the Visitor Economy and its value chain.

3. Bulgarian tourism sector and ESG challenges - possible solutions

Taking into account the results weakening European competitiveness, the European Commission and, respectively, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU are taking a course towards legislation more closely linked to reality and market factors, which mainly determine what **COST** the European society can bear in relation to the pursued "green" transformations. It is clear, however, that the interest in reducing harmful impacts on the environment, in creating more favourable living conditions for European citizens by respecting their social rights, but also in promoting business development is common, including for the Visitor Economy. At the same time, there are many more questions about the carbon footprint than there are answers at this stage. Tourism, including the Bulgarian tourism sector, consumes a significant amount of energy for lighting, heating/cooling, maintenance of various facilities, food preparation. The consumption of water resources is high - drinking water, water for domestic and hygienic needs, for water attractions - mainly hotels with their adjacent swimming pools and spas, water parks, golf courses, etc. The inadequate construction of tourist facilities with the bearing capacity of the respective territories and their characteristics gives rise to abrasive and landslide processes. The high seasonal concentration of tourist arrivals and the lack of a sufficient number of qualified staff deteriorate the quality of services offered in the tourist destination. In order for the Bulgarian tourism sector to cope with the new requirements and circumstances imposed by all the above factors, huge investments are needed, including to correct mistakes already made.

Investors, on the one hand, and tourists, on the other, will make their informed choices based on the trends highlighted. In this regard, it should be noted that the World Economic Forum in Davos adopted a policy of directly ranking tourist destinations according to their contribution to sustainable

development by changing the basis for their assessment - from "Travel Tourism Competitiveness Index" to "Travel Tourism Development Index."¹²

In order for the Bulgarian tourism sector to cope with the new challenges, change is needed in several directions:

Outlining specific policies to diversify the tourist offer of destination Bulgaria through direct marketing, information and technical support to service providers, especially SMEs, to expand the share of alternative types of tourism in the direction of "slow" and "fan" tourism with Bulgarian characteristics, which is positively evaluated at home and abroad. On this marketing basis, **the community character of tourism** would develop - family trips, professional groups, interest clubs;

Creating mechanisms to encourage circular economy in the sector - savings through reuse, recycling, adjustments in the way some or other goods (consumables) and services are offered. Saving food by limiting or abandoning the application of the "all inclusive" formula will have a positive result in terms of saving raw materials, reducing a significant part of variable costs, including for seasonal staff. Opportunities will be created to involve more local businesses in catering for tourists, whether on or off tourist sites, in accordance with their personal preferences;

Increasing the role of partnership for directly solving complex problems such as distribution of funding and its effects between interested parties, organizational support of various events, etc. It is probably a good opportunity through the Development of Regions 2021-2027 Programme of the Fund of Funds¹³ to participate with projects related to urban environment, educational and health structure, cultural tourism and sport;

Legislative change in favour of local authorities regarding the management and administration of goods of common interest for local communities and tourists, such as the use of adjacent natural and anthropogenic resources, environmental improvement, etc. For example, for seaside destinations, concessions on beaches should be abolished, the benefits of which do not justify the use of a resource that is fully owned by the state in private interest; for all areas of the country, set common conditions for camping, such that the so-called "wild" camping to be abolished completely; strict regime for the use of water resources, especially with regards to swimming pools (perhaps thousands), drinking water and that from mineral sources used in spas in view of the expected increasingly prolonged droughts, etc.;

Improve the provision of information to the sector with detailed, multilayered and timely information that reaches all interested users. Through it and the creation of mechanisms to monitor what is actually happening in the sector, it will be possible to respond flexibly and adequately to the constantly changing geopolitical, climate, energy¹⁴, economic and market environment.

¹² According to the specific point scores (1-lowest, 7-highest) destination Bulgaria takes position No. 41 with a score of 4.3. Of the European destinations, the top 5 (Spain, France, Germany, Switzerland and the UK) have scores from 5.2 to 5.0; followed by 27 destinations with scores from 4.9 to 4.1. With the rating of destination Bulgaria are also Lithuania – No. 42 and Georgia – No. 44. The remaining European destinations are rated with scores from 3.9 to 3.4.

¹³ B. Petkov, "Over BGN 2 billion will be managed by the Fund of Funds (equity risk financing) in the programming period 2021-2027".

¹⁴ In the opinion of Kuzman Iliev, an economic analyst, the rise of the so-called "green energy" cult increased the price of electricity by 1000% and of gas by 500 - 600%. See the newspaper "Minaha godini", issue 40, 30.09.2024, p.7; Boyan Rashev share his opinion that "During the cold winter months, however, power systems across South East Europe are heavily dependent on electricity exports from Bulgaria. Average winter electricity consumption in Bulgaria ranges from 5500 - 7000 MW, peaking in the evening hours. At this time solar and wind plants can't guarantee a kilowatt of power, and no significant batteries can be built in the next few years/.../The difference of 2500 - 3500 MW of load on our system each winter is covered by our coal plants/.../The coming winter will pose another serious test - 80% of Ukraine's thermal power plants are unable to produce electricity/.../No one in the region can provide this energy unless Bulgaria is able to export large quantities. How exactly does Europe plan to help Ukraine?/.../Not only will we be unable to provide the exports we need, but we will have trouble meeting our own consumption. There will be no ceiling for electricity prices on cold nights - 2000 BGN/megawatt hour will seem cheap to us/.../energy in the cold is life." See "And when winter is in the air, what are you going to do?" in "Bloomberg Businessweek Bulgaria", August, 2024, p.14-16

Conclusion

In order for the Bulgarian tourism sector to provide the advantages that tourism can in principle generate: satisfaction of individual life travel intentions, multifaceted development of a specific territory, the well-being of its population as well as to guarantee its own existence, it must be able to respond to the desires of the people. And this depends above all on the competence of the specialists involved directly or indirectly in its development. A multifaceted, sensible change is needed in order for Bulgaria as a destination to be noticeable and competitive in the context of its many attractive and globally popular European competitors.

"What remains absolutely true is that when you offer people what they want, the business survives. They haven't lost interest and will pay even more for good entertainment. Everything else/.../changes/.../ says Brian Lord, CEO of Creative Artists Agency LLC - Hollywood, quoted by Lukas Shaw on page 68 in "Bloomberg Businessweek Bulgaria", September, 2024.

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