A NEW VISION FOR THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE TOURIST SUBREGION[1]

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ABSTRACT

The tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe is one of the four subregions of the European tourist region. Before the crisis of 2020, the subregion registered the highest growth rate in its tourism within the European region which gives the World Tourism Organization reason to consider it as the most promising in Europe. The modern tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe consists of 21 countries. They are located not only in Europe, as the name of the subregion suggests, but in large parts of North and Central Asia. The countries are united by their common past in the Eastern bloc. From the socialist past originate the lower price levels preserved to this day, which are a common feature of the countries of the considered tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe. This is where the similarities end. The large territorial scope and the presence of a large number of countries leads to large differences within the subregion. The lack of homogeneity calls into question the real existence of such a tourist subregion. This gives us a reason to analyze critically the existence of the current tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe and to suggest its transformation. In order to prove our working hypothesis of heterogeneity between the countries and the need for transformation of the current tourist subregion, we use and analyze a significant amount of digital information provided by various international organizations monitoring world tourism as well as own calculations and analyzes.

Keywords: Central and Eastern European tourist subregion, international tourism, tourist destinations, tourist flows, opportunities for transformation

INTRODUCTION

The Central and Eastern European subregion registered the highest growth rate in its tourism within the European tourist region before the crisis of 2020, which gives grounds of the World Tourism Organization to consider it as the most promising in Europe. [10] A number of publications also report on the activities and prospects for tourism growth in the tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe. For example, Stankova points out new opportunities for developing the concept of boutique hospitality. [7] Apostolov considers the countries of Central Europe and Russia as one of the modern geographical poles to advance the science of tourism. [1] “Several Southeastern European governments have identified tourism as a priority sector to foster economic growth, paving the way for future policy reforms.” [3] Banaszkiewicz, Graburn and Owsianowska outline as promising for the subregion types of tourism related to identity and memories such as

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commemorative tourism, as well as the revival of religious and ethnotourism. [2] Central and Eastern Europe are listed as one of the hotspots in the world for the development of adventure tourism by the Trade Association for Adventure Tourism (ATTA). [19] Other authors are more skeptical. They point out that "with a dynamic mix of mass and niche markets to target, the potential of rural tourism development in South-eastern Europe continues to be constrained by regional instability. [8] According to Nikolov, Lyubomirova and Tanakov the South-eastern European countries are lagging behind the other European states in the development of accessible tourism policy and practice. [6] The publication of New Trends and Opportunities for Central and Eastern European Tourism makes a significant contribution to the study of the peculiarities of tourism in the subregion.[5] The number of tourists from Asia is expected to increase, as well as the number of guests from the age group 65+ [22] Despite the pandemic, 277 new hotels are expected to open in Central and Eastern Europe by 2024, predominantly with four and five stars. Most of them will be in Poland (62) and Russia (61). Leading cities in the number of new hotels will be Budapest (14) and Moscow (11). [24]

The tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe is part of the European tourist region. Geographically, however, most of its territory is located in Asia. The subregion comprises 21 countries that are territorially dispersed, ethnically, culturally and religiously different, but with a common historical past. The countries also differ in the tourist resource potential, as well as in the degree of tourism development. All this calls into question the real existence of the tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe as a homogeneous whole and raises the question of whether a tourist subregion formed on the basis of a geopolitical principle is rather a mechanical sum of heterogeneous countries in tourism development. This is the working hypothesis of the present study.

The focus of the study are the countries of the tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe. These are 21 countries - Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. They are located not only in Europe, as the name of the subregion suggests, but in large parts of Northern and Central Asia. The countries are united by their common past in the Eastern bloc. However, this does not include the countries of the Western Balkans, which originate in the former Yugoslavia (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Northern Macedonia) and Albania, which in other sources belong to Eastern Europe [16] [17] [18] [20] [21] [22] UNWTO classifies them as the tourist subregion of Southern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean.

The subject of the study is the current state of tourism in the countries of the tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe, reported by basic and derived indicators characterizing the tourism industry.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the current state of tourism in the tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as to offer a vision for its future development. To achieve this goal it is necessary to solve a series of research tasks

- to choose an appropriate methodology according to the set goal;
- to select relevant and reliable sources of information;
- to analyze and present suitably the collected and processed information;
- to formule conclusions and recommendations.

The study encountered a number of difficulties and limitations in its conduct. The large-area region makes it difficult to study it extensively on the spot (in situ) and accordingly limits the opportunities of author's direct observations. This is a prerequisite for using mainly ready-made (secondary) information provided by authoritative sources. Another difficulty is that some countries do not provide data of the surveyed indicators, and the data for other countries are not completely up-to-date. This in turn makes it difficult to compare and analyze between countries. We strive to use up-to-date and representative data. For some of the indicators data from 2020 or the beginning of 2021 are used (number of population, area, number of sites in the UNESCO list, etc.). On the other hand, the data from 2019, when tourism in the world and respectively in the subregion reaches its maximum progressat this stage, can be considered representative in terms of the state and development of the tourism industry. Therefore, the data from 2019 have been selected and used for most indicators characterizing tourism. However, this creates a contradiction between the pursuit of relevance and the pursuit of representativeness.

METHODOLOGY

Data from a number of established and prestigious world organizations have been used to determine the place of the countries from the Central and Eastern European tourist subregion in international tourism. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) monitors and analyzes the state of international tourism in over 200 countries around the world by providing up-to-date statistics. Data from the World Economic Forum, which ranks 140 countries in the world on a significant set of various indicators related to their tourism development, were also used. We also examined the UNESCO list of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

For the purposes of the analysis 2 types of indicators were used:

- basic

Such are tourist arrivals (excluding transits) and their modification and revenues from international tourism. They are examined by current UNWTO statistics. We also include reports on the number of sites in the list of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the area of the countries and the number of their population.

- synthetic (derivatives)

Some of them are calculated and provided by the cited international organizations. Such are changes in arrivals, changes in revenues from international tourism, assessment of tourism, share of tourism in GDR, share of tourism in exports, share of tourism in exports of services.

Other derivative indicators are the share of arrivals in Europe and the subregion, revenues from one tourist, share of revenues from international tourism in Europe and the subregion, tourism efficiency, tourism intensity, density of sites included in the UNESCO list. These indicators are calculated and analyzed by the author on the basis of the main indicators. The obtained numerical indicators are presented in tables and diagrams. The tables are used for the purpose of relatively comprehensive presentation of a large amount of information. Charts are used to illustrate key indicators. The presented data are interpreted using general logical methods - analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, generalization. Through the use of general logical methods, conclusions have been drawn and recommendations have been made.

TOURIST GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The tourist-geographical position largely determines the tourist attractiveness of the countries and regions, although in itself it is not a tourist resource. It is important to clarify not just where a site is located, in this case the Central and Eastern European tourism subregion, but above all how it interacts with major tourist markets, what is the accessibility to transportation services, and how the geographical location largely determines the tourist resource potential and the development of tourism industry in these countries.

Figure. 1: Countries in the Central and Eastern Europe tourism subregion [25]

Geographically, the Central and Eastern Europe tourist subregion covers not only Eastern Europe and large parts of Central Europe, but also the whole of North Asia and large parts of Central Asia (Fig. 1). This is the subregion that extends most widely in an east-west direction, covering almost half of the globe. The meridional subregion falls mainly in the temperate latitudes, covering parts of the subtropical and subpolar zones.

The area of the subregion is 23 167 985 km2, which is 15.5% of the land surface of the Earth. It includes 21 countries that differ significantly in area and demographic potential (Table 1). Near ¾ of the subregion is occupied by Russia. Another country with a significant area is Kazakhstan. The other countries are small (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan - a total of 10 with an area of less than 100 thousand km2) or medium in area (Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Belarus, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan - a total of 9 with an area of 100 thousand km2 to 1 million km2). Therefore, there are strong territorial disparities between the countries in the subregion. On the one hand, there is a strong territorial fragmentation between a large number of small and medium-sized countries, and on the other hand, there are the giants Russia and Kazakhstan, covering 85.5% of the territory of the subregion.

The differences in the territorial scope largely determine the differences in the tourist resource potential of the countries. Countries with a small territory naturally have a more limited number of sights, places of interest and tourist sites. Large countries, on the other hand, find it difficult to absorb and improve the huge spaces for the needs of tourism. Practice shows that the most successful countries in tourism are medium-sized countries.

Table. 1: Basic data for the countries in the tourist subregion Central and Eastern Europe

CountriesS	Area in km^2 [9]	Share of total area in % [2]	POPULATION in millions.[13]	Share of the population of the region in % [3]	The most famous tourist places and sites - tourist symbols
Poland	312 690	1,34	37,9	9,7	Old Torun, Old Krakow, Velichka Salt Mines
Czech Republic	78 870	0,34	10,7	2,7	Prague with Charles Bridge, Charles Boil, Brno
Slovakia	48 845	0,21	5,5	1,4	Bratislava, Kosice, Banska Bystrica
Hungary	93 030	0,40	9,6	2,5	Budapest - Parliament and Fishermen's Towers, Lake Balaton
Romania	238 390	1,02	19,1	4,9	Castles in Bran and Peles, the Palace of Parliament
Bulgaria	110 990	0,48	6,9	1,8	Black Sea coast, Madara horseman, Rila monastery, the Rose valley
Estonia	45 230	0,19	**1,3**	**0,4**	Tallinn, castles
Latvia	64 600	0,28	1,9	0,5	Riga - the old town, castles
Lithuania	65 300	0,28	2,7	0,7	Kaunas, Trakai Castle
Belarus	207 600	0,89	9,4	2,4	Nesvizh Castle, lakes
Ukraine [4]	603 700	2,61	43,7	11,2	Yalta, Kiev, Odessa
Moldova	33 840	0,15	4,0	1	The monasteries of Capriana, the town of Orheiul Vechi
Russia	**17 075 400**	**73,70**	**145,9**	**37,3**	St. Petersburg, Moscow, Lake Baikal
Georgia [5]	69 700	0,30	3,9	1	Tbilisi, the old capital Mtskheta, monasteries
Armenia	**29 800**	**0,13**	3,0	0,8	Yerevan, monasteries
Azerbaijan	86 600	0,37	10,2	2,6	Sheki, Naphthalene, mud volcanoes
Kazakhstan	2 724 900	11,76	19,0	4,9	Astana, Almaty
Uzbekistan	447 400	1,93	33,7	8,6	Samarkand, Khiva and the Silk Road, Tashkent, Kazalkum Desert
Turkmenistan	488 100	2,10	6,1	1,6	Ashgabat with the highest minaret
Kyrgyzstan	199 900	0,86	6,6	1,7	Tianshan Mountain, glaciers and lakes
Tajikistan	143 100	0,62	9,6	2,5	Pamir Mountains, lakes
Total	**23 167 985**	**100**	**390,7**	**100**	

Significant differences are also observed in the population. This subregion includes the most populous European country, Russia, but most countries have small population (less

[2] Own calculation
[3] Own calculation
[4] UNWTO considers Ukraine as a single country and provides data for the whole of Ukraine
[5] UNWTO views Georgia as a united country

than 10 million people). More than 390 million people or 5% of the world's population live in the subregion. The largest population is in Russia , where more than 1/3 of the population in the subregion. However, the country has some of the least populated areas on the planet. Most countries in the subregion have limited demographic potential, e.g., Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Georgia, Moldova (less than 4 million). The small population can be seen as a constraint on development. This speaks of limited demographic potential, which affects the quantity and quality of human resources, and as we know, tourism is a service industry in which the human factor is of paramount importance. Ukraine, Poland, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Romania, the Czech Republic, and Azerbaijan (over 10 million) have significant human resources. Therefore, these countries can be considered as the largest potential generators of tourist flows. Probably this is one of the essential prerequisites for these countries to report growth in various indicators of their tourism industry. The location of the subregion can be defined as at crossroads. Important roads connecting Europe and Asia pass through it. This is a condition for significant traffic of human beings and goods, including those coming for tourist purposes, as well as transit.

Most of the countries are located in the continental interior of Eurasia, which limits their access to the sea, as well as predetermines the strong continental features of the climate - the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Moldova, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - a total of 12 countries, ie. more than half of the countries in the subregion. This fact can be considered as a significant obstacle to their tourist development, due to the territorially predetermined impossibility for development of the most widespread type of tourism, namely sea tourism. This is the reason why many of these countries are oriented towards the development of cultural tourism, mountain tourism and other types of specialized tourism, along with their function to generate potential tourist flows.

Other countries such as Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland have access only to the cold Baltic Sea, which is also a limiting factor for beach recreation, but contributes to the development of cruise tourism. Russia can also belong to this group, because over 90% of its coastline belongs to cold seas. A small number of countries have access to a warm sea coast. These are Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia and a small part of Russia; they are connected to the oceans through the Black Sea. The location of the Black Sea as the southern border of the subregion in relatively warm latitudes is a favorable prerequisite for the best development of beach recreation along the Black Sea coast. Although the Caspian Sea is essentially a lake, its coast can also be seen as a favorable precondition for the development of tourism and recreation in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Russia. Lake Balaton in Hungary has well-defined recreational functions. The most significant generators of tourist flows in the subregion are Russia and Poland as countries with the largest population and relatively good socio-economic indicators. However, their citizens choose destinations mainly outside Central and Eastern Europe and the preferences are mainly focused on the tourist subregion of Southern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. Most incoming tourists are from other EU countries, but their trips are mainly to EU member states in the studied subregion due to the relaxed access regime and it is not an exaggeration to say that the Asian part remains unknown to them. The location of the countries in the subregion is also strategic. They are on the verge of sharing influence between Russia and the Western geopolitical space on the one hand, and between the Christian and Muslim geocultural belts on the other. From a linguistic point of view, the Slavic languages in the north and west and the Turko-Altaic languages mainly in the south and east are predominant. In connection with these and other differences, as well as in connection with the small territorial and demographic potential of most of the countries in the subregion, they rather combine and strive to balance these differences and find it more difficult to defend their own positions. This makes them dependent territories, which is largely true for their tourism development. The low solvency of a large part of the population is a prerequisite for their transformation into the cheapest destinations within the European tourist region. Therefore, the natural-geographical location of the countries can be considered as a limiting factor for the development of tourism and in particular the most popular type – sea tourism. Another limiting factor for tourist travel is the location of the subregion in two different geopolitical areas (European Union - Russia), which is accompanied by a visa regime between some countries. From the point of view of the location in relation to the main emitting tourist markets, the location of the Central and Eastern Europe subregion is rather favorable. The European tourist region has the most intensive tourist trips in the world, which is a prerequisite for the formation of a significant inflow of tourists from Europe. On the other hand, China is the southeastern border of the subregion, which can also be seen as a favorable precondition for the formation of a significant inflow of tourists from the world's largest generator in the future.

TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

The transport accessibility of the countries is facilitated by the predominant flat and hilly relief in most of the territory of the Central and Eastern European subregion. This is a requirement for the unimpeded use of road and rail transport. The Trans-Siberian Railway passes through the entire territory of the subregion, which is also used for the purposes of tourist transport. On the other hand, the harsh conditions of the North, as well as the huge distances, make the use of land transport difficult and irrational. In this connection, air transport is becoming increasingly important. Key airports in the subregion are Moscow and Warsaw, which has a significant impact on the number of arrivals in Russia and Poland. Moscow airports make important connections with large parts of Asia, and transatlantic flights to America are made via Warsaw. It can be expected that air transport will continue to strengthen its position both in relation to the relative reduction in the cost of air transport and due to the implementation of important intercontinental air connections. The use of water transport is the most limited. There are conditions for cruises on the shores of the Baltic and Black Seas, as well as on the major rivers - Volga, Dnieper, Dniester and Danube. At present, only the potential of the Baltic Sea as a link to Northern and Western Europe is well used in this respect.

PLACE IN WORLD TOURISM

The Central and Eastern European tourism subregion is part of the world’s leading tourism region, namely Europe. This is the region with the best developed tourism in the world at this stage. 58% (2020) of the world’s tourist flows and 38.7% of the revenues from tourism in the world (2019) are concentrated in it. [12] In the European tourist region, the arrivals of international tourists as well as the revenues from international tourism are unevenly distributed between subregions and destinations, but are relatively more balanced than in the rest of the world’s tourist regions. The leading subregion in both indicators is the Southern European and the Eastern Mediterranean sub-region, followed by the Western European subregion. The subregions of Central and Eastern Europe and Northern Europe are more modestly represented. Belonging to the European tourist region is a good prerequisite for intensive incoming and outgoing tourist flow; there are conditions to strive for high standards in tourism and favorable prospects for future development. On the other hand, the Central and Eastern European subregion ranks last among the other subregions in the European tourist region in terms of revenues from international tourism. The reasons for this are related to the lower prices of tourist products in the subregion, which is largely due to the lower payment opportunities of domestic tourists. The Central and Eastern European subregion ranks third in the European tourist region in terms of international tourist arrivals. According to this indicator, the subregion is less attractive to Southern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as to Western Europe, which has older traditions in tourism and a significantly longer coastline.

MAIN INDICATORS FOR TOURISM

Table 2 characterizes the state of the tourism industry by key indicators such as number of arrivals of international tourists, changes in arrivals, share of arrivals in the subregion and share of arrivals in the European tourist region.

Table. 2: Arrivals to the countries of the Central and Eastern European tourist subregion in 2019 or 2018. (marked with *)

Countries	Number of arrivals in millions [12]	Share of arrivals among the countries of the subregion in % [6]	Share of arrivals in the European tourist region in % [7]
Poland	21,158	13,8	2,8
Czech Republic *	14,283	9,3	1,9
Slovakia*	5,453	3,6	0,7
Hungary	16,937	11,1	2,3
Romania	2,684	1,8	0,4
Bulgaria	9,312	6,1	1,2
Estonia	3,345	2,9	0,4
Latvia	1,935	1,3	0,3
Lithuania	2,875	1,9	0,4
Belarus	2,201	1,4	0,3
Ukraine	13,438	8,8	1,8
Moldova	0,174	0,1	0,02
Russia	24,592	16,0	3,3
Georgia	5,080	3,3	0,7
Armenia	1,894	1,2	0,3
Azerbaijan	2,864	1,9	0,4
Kazakhstan	There are no actual data	-	-
Uzbekistan	6,749	4,4	0,9
Turkmenistan	There are no actual data	-	-
Kyrgyzstan	8,508	5,6	1,1
Tajikistan *	1,250	0,8	0,2
Total /average	153,271	100	20,5

In 2019, more than 153 million tourists traveled to the countries of the Central and Eastern European subregion. These are 1/5 of all arrivals in the European tourist region. In table.

[6] Own calculations
[7] Own calculations

2 and FIG. 2 we can compare the countries according to the indicator number of arrivals of international tourists and respectively the share of the countries according to this indicator. Leaders of the researched indicator in the subregion are Russia and Poland. Hungary, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and Bulgaria also have leading positions. Uzbekistan, Slovakia, Georgia and Estonia are also characterized by more significant incoming tourist flows. The other countries form an insignificant share (less than 2%) of the arrivals in the subregion. These are Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. There are no up-to-date data for Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, which shows that tourism is not yet a priority for these countries. Therefore, almost half of the countries in the subregion are characterized by weak incoming tourist flows, which indicates the weak development of the tourism industry there.

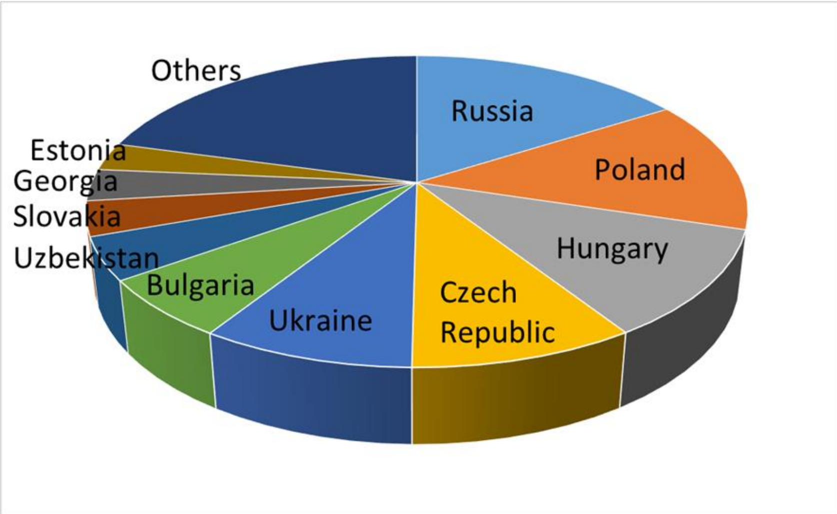

Figure. 2: Distribution of incoming international tourist flows among the countries of the tourist subregion Central and Eastern Europe.

The subregion recorded an overall growth in arrivals in 2019 of + 4.8%. The numbers are very different in terms of the development of the industry analyzed through changes in incoming tourist flows before the pandemic. As early as 2019, some of the countries in the subregion reported a decline in arrivals: Slovakia, Hungary, Latvia, Romania and Ukraine. At the same time, other countries are experiencing growth, as is the case in most countries in the subregion. The largest growth was recorded in the Central Asian republics - Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, with Tajikistan reporting an extremely large increase in arrivals of + 190% in just 1 year. This high value is related not only to the growth in the industry, but also to the low baseline of the arrivals of international tourists. Significant growth (over 5%) is also demonstrated by Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan and Poland. Therefore, arrivals in the subregion before 2020 are increasing, but this trend is unstable and unevenly distributed among the countries. This shows some development of the tourism industry in this part of the world but still timid and unconvincing.

Table 3 gives us information about the financial part of the tourism industry through the indicators revenues from international tourism, changes in revenues and share of revenues in the subregion and the tourist region of Europe.

Table. 3: Revenues from tourism of the countries of the tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe in 2019

Countries	**Revenues in billions of USD [12]**	**Share of revenues among the countries of the subregion in %[8]**	**Revenue share in the European tourist region in %[9]**
Poland	13,705	19,9	2,3
Czech Republic	7,303	10,5	1,3
Slovakia	3,203	4,7	0,6
Hungary	7,305	10,6	1,3
Romania	3,576	5,2	0,6
Bulgaria	4,287	6,2	0,7
Estonia	1,745	2,5	0,3
Latvia	1,017	1,9	0,2
Lithuania	1,493	2,1	0,3
Belarus	0,901	1,3	0,2
Ukraine	1,620	2,4	0,3
Moldova	0,396	5,8	0,07
Russia	10,961	15,6	1,9
Georgia	3,269	4,8	0,6
Armenia	1,528	2,2	0,3
Azerbaijan	1,792	2,6	0,3
Kazakhstan	2,463	3,6	0,4
Uzbekistan	1,481	2,1	0,3
Turkmenistan	There are no actual data	-	-
Kyrgyzstan	0,644	0,9	0,1
Tajikistan	0,014	0,02	0,02
Total /average	68,701	100	11,9

In 2019, the countries of the tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe have raised over 68 billion USD revenues from international tourism. However, this is less than 12% of the revenues in the European tourist region. Table 3 and FIG. 3 show that the leading countries in terms of international tourism revenue are Poland and Russia, followed by Hungary and the Czech Republic. Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Georgia and Slovakia also generated more significant revenues. It is noted that most countries reach a share of over 2% of revenues in the region, which means that revenues are more evenly distributed among the countries than arrivals. Poland displaces Russia from the first position. Poland generates more revenue from fewer tourists than Russia, indicating higher price levels. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary are located on the western periphery of the subregion. Accordingly, a large part of their incoming tourists are from Western Europe due to the territorial proximity and facilitated travel in the EU, which is associated with higher solvency of tourists and thus the opportunity to impose higher price levels.

[8] Own calculations
[9] Own calculations

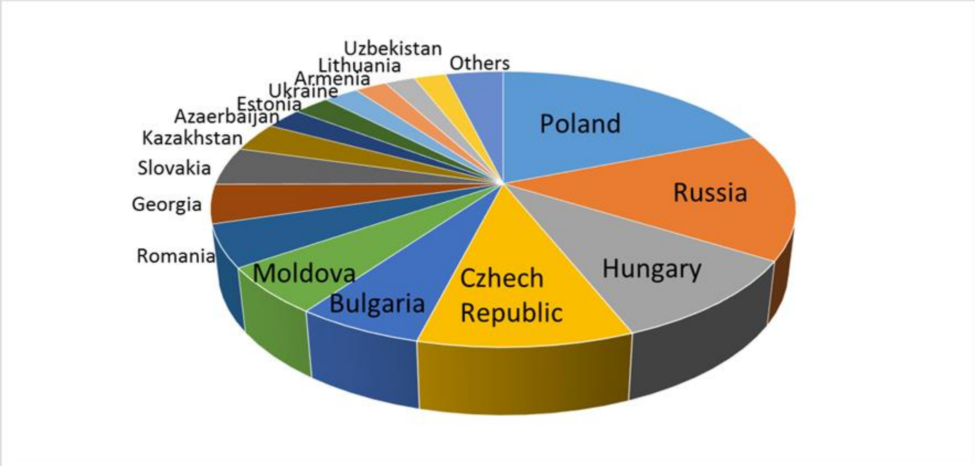

Figure. 3: Distribution of revenues from international tourism among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 2019.

Table 3. also shows that in 2019 almost all countries in the subregion have growth in revenues from international tourism. is the highest growth is in the Central Asian republics - Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, which, together with the growing arrivals, indicates a boom in tourism in these countries. High growth (over 10%) is also reported by Hungary, Romania, Ukraine and Armenia. Therefore, they can talk about rapid development of the tourism industry. Growth is significant (over 5%) in Kazakhstan, Poland and Slovakia. Only Russia and Azerbaijan report a decline, and in Azerbaijan it is large. Overall in the subregion the growth is significant (+ 8.9%), therefore, we can conclude that there is an active movement of the tourism industry, which will lead to its stronger development in the near future and a stronger performance of the Central and Eastern Europe in the European and world tourism. This growth will be uneven not only in territorial but also in temporal aspect. The biggest boom can be expected in the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus republics, which are just beginning to make full use of their tourism potential. On the other hand, destinations in the western part of the region are more favored by the proximity of major European emitting tourism markets. In addition to the already mentioned Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, this also affects Estonia, which demonstrates the highest values of revenue of all the Baltic republics due to its close contacts with Scandinavia. The countries of the eastern part of the subregion rely mainly on the Russian emitting tourist market. It is quite promising in connection with the increase in travel of Russians, due to improvement in their socio-economic situation, increasing incomes, as well as the demand for new places for tourism.

ADDITIONAL AND DERIVATIVE INDICATORS

Table 4 provides information on the importance of the tourism industry for the countries by examining the following indicators: share of the incoming international tourism in the country's GDP, contribution of tourism to the formation of exports, contribution of tourism to the formation of services' exports to the countries of the tourist subregion Central and Eastern Europe. On average, for the Central and Eastern European tourism subregion, tourism forms 4.9% of GDP, which means that tourism is a well-represented industry, but the subregion does not rely on it. International tourism is most the important in the formation of GDP of Georgia, Armenia, Bulgaria and Estonia (over 7%). Therefore, the economies of these countries are highly dependent on tourism, which adversely affects them in times of crisis, for example in 2020. Tourism is the least important in terms of GDP for Russia, as well as for Romania, Ukraine, Kazakhstan (less than 2%), which have other priority sectors in their economic development

Table. 4: Additional indicators characterizing international tourism in the countries of the Central and Eastern European tourism subregion

COUNTRIES	Share of incoming international tourism in the GDP of the countries in %	Share of incoming international tourism in the formation of exports of countries in %	Share of incoming international tourism in the formation of services' exports of the countries in %
Poland	2,7	4,8	22,7
Czech Republic	3,4	4,3	27,3
Slovakia	3,1	3,3	27,6
Hungary	6,2	7,2	35,6
Romania	1,4	3,2	11,9
Bulgaria	7,8	11,7	47,3
Estonia	7,6	10,2	20,9
Latvia	3,0	5,0	17,0
Lithuania	2,7	3,2	12,2
Belarus	2,0	2,9	13,6
Ukraine	1,7	3,8	14,4
Moldova	4,4	14,5	33,9
Russia	1,1	3,7	28,9
Georgia	21,7	39,5	78,3
Armenia	9,9	26,3	59,8
Azerbaijan	6,0	11,1	60,3
Kazakhstan	1,6	4,0	36,3
Uzbekistan	2,6	9,3	47,8
Turkmenistan	No data	No data	No data
Kyrgyzstan	6,0	18,7	61,1
Tajikistan	2,3	15,3	70,6
average	4,9	10,1	36,4

Tourism forms 1/10 of the exports of the countries from the tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe. Table 4 and fig. 4 show that tourism forms an extremely large share of exports of Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Bulgaria, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Uzbekistan, which indicates the strong dependence of these countries on the tourism industry and the weak export development of their economies at this stage. The least important is tourism in the exports of Belarus, but also for Russia, Slovakia, Romania, Lithuania, Ukraine (less than 4%). The share of tourism in the export of services in the tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe is 36.5%. Therefore, the subregion, although not a leader in Europe, is highly dependent on the tourism industry, which forms more than 1/3 in the export services sector. This dependence is most pronounced in Georgia, but also in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan (over 60%). Therefore, the economies of these countries are the most dependent on tourism and consequently the most vulnerable in the tourism industry in times of crisis. In half of the countries in the subregion, tourism accounts for over 1/3 of the exports of services, which confirms the essential and even leading importance of this industry in the economies of the countries. The smallest share in the field of services is formed by tourism in Romania, as well as in Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine (less than 15%), which indicates that the economies of these countries are the least dependent on tourism.

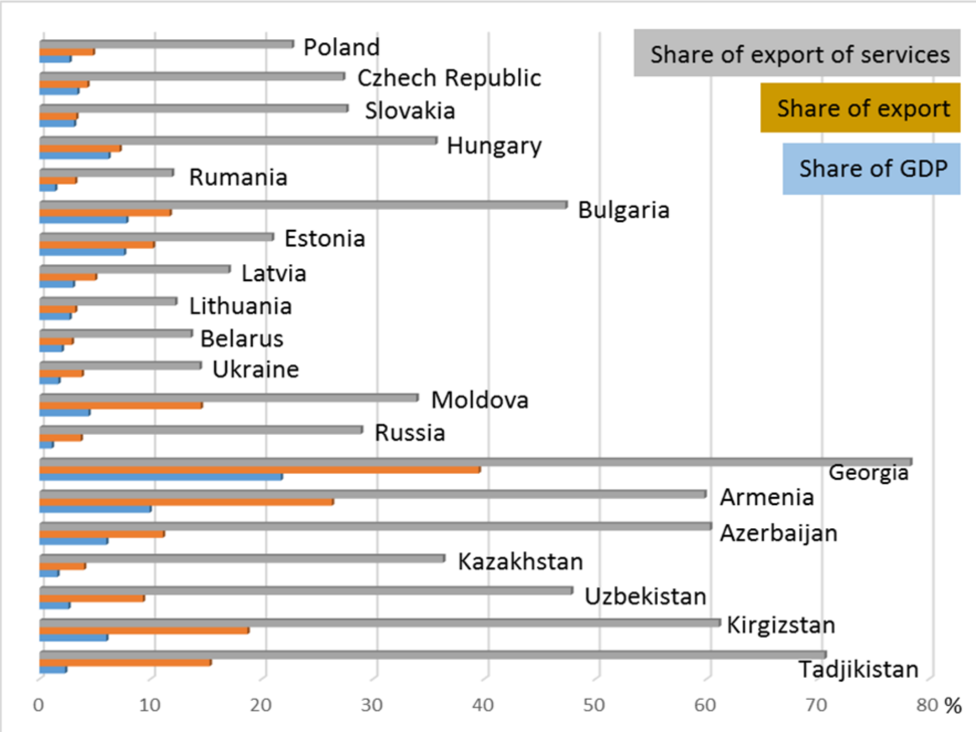

Figure. 4: Comparison between the countries of the Central and Eastern European tourism subregion by the indicators Share of tourism in the GDP of the countries and Share of tourism i n the export of the countries and Share of tourism in services export of the countries

In Table 5, Figure. 6 and Figure. 7, a comparison is made between the countries of the tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe in terms of derivative indicators characterizing international tourism, namely income per tourist, tourist intensity and tourist efficiency.

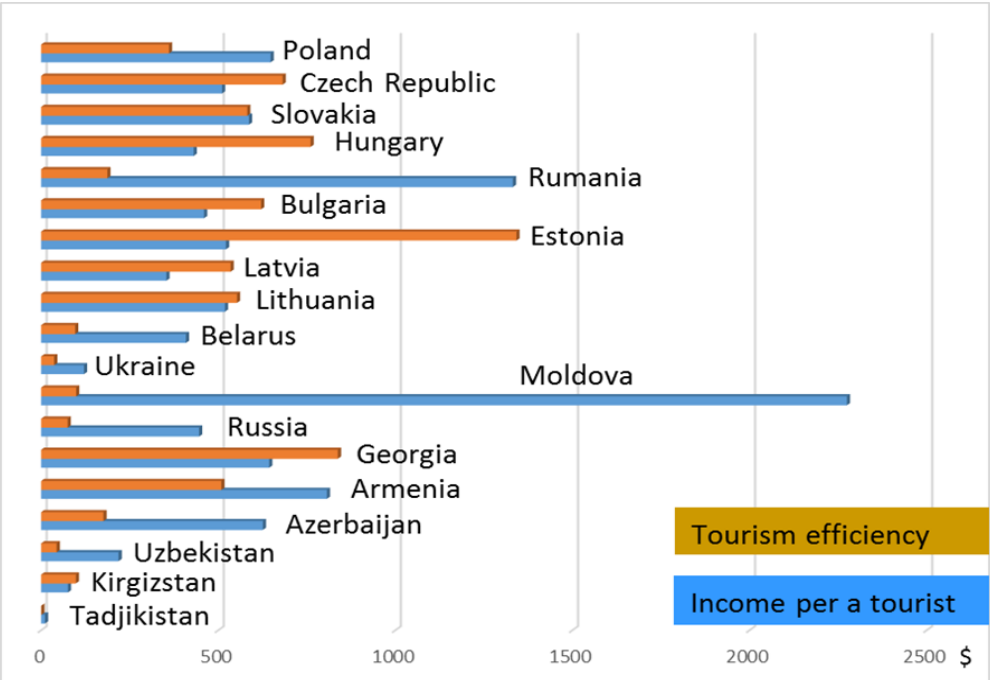

Figure. 5: Comparison between the countries of the Central and Eastern European subregion according to the indicators Income per tourist and Tourism efficiency

Table. 5: Derivative indicators characterizing international tourism in the countries of the Central and Eastern European tourism subregion in 2019[10]

COUNTRIES	Income per tourist in USD	Tourist intensity	Tourist efficiency in USD
Poland	648	0,6	361
Czech Republic	511	1,3	682
Slovakia	587	1	582
Hungary	431	1,7	761
Romania	1 332	0,1	187
Bulgaria	460	1,3	621
Estonia	522	2,5	1 342
Latvia	354	1	535
Lithuania	519	1,5	553
Belarus	409	0,8	96
Ukraine	121	0,3	37
Moldova	2 275	0,03	99
Russia	446	0,2	75
Georgia	644	1,3	838
Armenia	807	0,6	509
Azerbaijan	626	0,3	176
Kazakhstan	-	-	130
Uzbekistan	219	0,2	44
Turkmenistan	-	-	-
Kyrgyzstan	76	1,3	98
Tajikistan	11	0,1	1
Average	448	0,8	376

Estonia has the highest tourism efficiency due to its small population, on the one hand, and the realization of significant revenues from international tourism, on the other. In many countries, however, tourism efficiency is very low due to the reasons already discussed. Such countries are Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus. It is noted that they are all in the eastern part of the subregion.

Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan are distinguished by high values of tourist intensity. Most of them have small population, which leads to the fact that the number of tourists arriving in a year is more than the citizens of the country, and this burdens the social environment. However, there are no countries in which the values of tourist intensity are too high (over 3). Countries with low and very low values of tourist intensity (below 0.5) predominate significantly. Such are Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine, Romania. This is related to the larger population of these countries, but also indicates the weaker development of tourism. The majority of their population has neither direct nor indirect contact with tourists, which limits their opportunities to generate income from the tourism industry.

Relevant data that can be used to compare the countries of the Central and Eastern European tourism subregion are provided by UNESCO and the World Economic Forum. They are presented in table. 6 and Figure. 8

[10] Own calculations

Table 6: Comparison between countries according to UNESCO and the World Economic Forum

COUNTRIES	Number of sites on the UNESCO list [24]	Density of UNESCO sites per 100 thousand km-2 [11]	Place in the rankings The Travel & Tourism Competitivness Index [15]	trend	Evaluation according to The Travel & Tourism Competitivness Index [15]	trend
Poland	17	5,4	42	↑	4,2	↑
Czech Republic	16	**20,3**	**38**	↓	**4,3**	↑
Slovakia	8	16,4	60	↑	4,0	↑
Hungary	8	8,6	48	↑	4,2	↑
Romania	9	3,8	56	↑	4,0	↑
Bulgaria	10	9	45	↓	4,2	↑
Estonia	2	4,4	46	↓	4,2	=
Latvia	2	3,1	53	↑	4,0	=
Lithuania	4	6,1	59	↓	4,0	↑
Belarus	4	1,9	-		-	
Ukraine	7	1,2	78	↑	3,7	↑
Moldova	**1**	3	103	↑	3,3	↑
Russia	**30**	**0,2**	**39**	↑	**4,3**	↑
Georgia	4	5,7	68	↑	3,8	↑
Armenia	3	10	79	↑	3,7	↑
Azerbaijan	3	3,5	71	=	3,8	↑
Kazakhstan	5	**0,2**	80	↑	3,7	↑
Uzbekistan	5	11,2	-	-	-	-
Turkmenistan	3	0,6	-	-	-	-
Kyrgyzstan	3	1,5	**110**	*	**3,2**	*
Tajikistan	2	1,4	104	↑	3,3	↑
Total / average	**146/ 7**	**5,3**	**65**	↑	**3,9**	↑

Legend: ↑ Improving the position / grade
↓ Lowering the position / grade
= Keeping the same position / grade
* New in the ranking

UNESCO annually updates the number of sites included in the List of World Cultural and Natural Heritage and enriches it with new ones. As a result, at the beginning of 2022, the list contains 1154 sites in 167 countries, including all countries in the studied tourist subregion. The average number of sites in a country is close to 7. Table 6 shows that Russia has the largest number of sites on the UNESCO List, followed by Poland, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria. The other countries have less than 10 sites. The lowest number is in Moldova (1), as well as in Estonia, Latvia and Tajikistan (2 sites each).

The different number is due both to the different cultural priorities of the countries in terms of applying for the List, the preservation and maintenance of the sites, and to their different territorial scope. Therefore, the derivative indicator Density of sites on the UNESCO list per 100 thousand km2 is also used here. This indicator gives a good idea of their concentration and distribution. According to this indicator, the most densely populated sites are in the Czech Republic. Slovakia, Uzbekistan and Armenia also have a high density of sites. The other countries have less than 10 sites per 100 thousand km2 or less than 1 site per 10 thousand km2, which makes the sites relatively distant from each other and to some extent makes it difficult to connect them in tourist routes. The average

[11] Own calculations

density of sites under UNESCO protection for the region is about 5 sites per 100 thousand km2. The lowest density of sites is in Russia and Kazakhstan, due to the large area of these two countries. Other countries with very low density of sites are Belarus, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, which is associated, on the one hand, with their significant area and, on the other hand, with the small number of sites in each of them. Due to its large area, the country with the largest number of sites Russia has the lowest density of their distribution. The following regularity is observed: the countries with a large territory have a larger number of objects, but rather low density, and the countries with a small territory have a smaller number of objects, but they form a significantly higher density. The UNESCO list continues to be enriched with new sites from the subregion. The newly added are from the Czech Republic (2), Russia (1), Poland (1) Slovakia (1), Romania (1), Georgia (1). This is 21% of all new sites in the world, which testifies to the rapidly improving position of the subregion in the world map

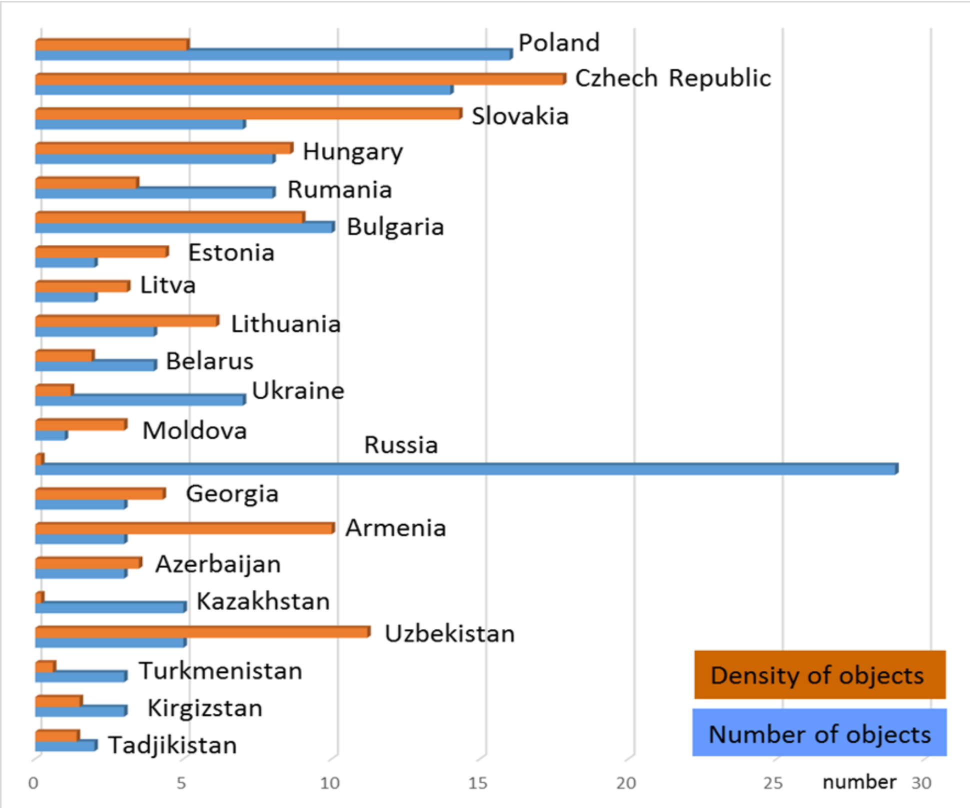

Figure. 6: Comparison between the countries of the Central and Eastern European tourist subregion according to the indicators Number of sites in the UNESCO list and Density of sites per 100 km2

The World Economic Forum regularly compiles and presents a ranking reflecting the state of the tourism industry of the countries in the world, regarding a number of indicators. This makes the assessment complex and extremely accurate. The latest edition of 2019 includes 140 countries from around the world. It also includes most countries in the tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe. Table 5 shows that the highest scores in this ranking belong to the Czech Republic (4.3) and Russia (4.3), which are respectively in front positions (38th and 39th). The rating of Kyrgyzstan is lowest, which takes 110th position with a score of 3.2. Belarus, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan remain outside the ranking, although Uzbekistan is ranked 115th in the 2017 ranking. Kyrgyzstan is included in the ranking for the first time. Calculating the average score for the region we get 3.9,

and as it can seen the countries with a score of 4.0 (Slovakia, Romania, Lithuania and Latvia) and 4.2 (Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Estonia) are thr most.
Compared to the previous edition of the ranking in 2017, we observe some positive trends. Almost all countries have raised their ratings. This is to some extent reflected in the movement of many of them to higher positions in the rankings. There are considerable changes in:

- Ukraine, which moves from 88-th to 78-th position;
- Romania, which moves from 68-th to 56-th place;
- Russia, which moves from 43-rd to 39-th position

The ratings of these countries have increased by 0.2, which is a significant progress for such a short period and speaks of a rapid pace in the development of tourism and, more specifically of improvment in the quality of the tourism industry in these countries.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSFORMATION

The review shows that the tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe includes a large number of diverse countries. They were united not at random, but on the basis of their common past in the Eastern bloc. Thirty years after the disintegration of the socialist camp, however, there are not so many similarities between the countries as far as tourism is concerned. They can be marked in the following directions:

- The countries do not have the same characteristics and are not homogenious in the current subregion. They differ significantly in the main indicators in tourism such as the arrival of international tourists, revenues from international tourism.
- The countries differ significantly in the derivative indicators characterizing the tourist activities, namely income per tourist, tourist intensity, tourist efficiency, share of tourism in GDP, tourism share in countries' exports , share of tourism in exports of services.
- The assessment of the tourism industry of the countries in the subregion made by the World Economic Forum is also different, as the differences of the countries by position in the ranking are especially large.

The most significant similarity is that the countries of the subregion are characterized by maintaining relatively low price levels, which has a negative impact on revenues from international tourism and tourism efficiency. But even on this indicator there are significant differences between the countries in the western and eastern part of the subregion. This is due to the fact that this is the most extensive tourist subregion in the west-east direction, which inevitably leads to differences. Geographically, much of the subregion's territory is located in Asia and not in Europe, which calls into question not only the name but also the existence of the subregion in its current form.
The conclusion from these differences is that the tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe needs transformation. The subregion needs to be transformed into a more territorially compact area of a more homogeneous type. This is the only way to become a real tourist subregion.
The proposed transformation can be carried out in the following directions:

1. Preserving the existence of the Central and Eastern European tourist subregion within the European tourist region, but with a new scope. It is reasonable to include in the subregion Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Russia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan - a total of 15 countries that are functionally related to the countries of the European tourist region through their incoming and outgoing tourist flows.

2. Establishment of a tourist subregion of Central Asia within the Asia-Pacific tourist subregion. It is reasonable for the subregion to include Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. These are 5 countries with a total area of over 4 million km2 and a population of over 70 million people, which is reasonable enough for these countries to become a separate tourist subregion. These countries are characterized by similar characteristics of their tourism, which is a prerequisite for homogeneity and, accordingly, for the existence of an independent tourist subregion. The Central Asian republics have a significant and specific tourist resource potential, which is yet to be discovered by international tourists. In some of them there is a rise in the tourism industry, which may grow into a boom in tourism in Central Asia in the near future. It can be expected that these tourists sites are most often visited by tourists from China and Russia, due to the territorial neighborhood, the demographic and economic potential of these generators. Due to all this, it is not right for these countries to be depersonalized within a significantly larger subregion.
3. Bulgaria's transition to the tourist subregion of Southern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. Geographically, Bulgaria is a Balkan country and therefore part of Southern Europe. International tourist flows to and from Bulgaria are formed mainly by the countries of the Southern Europe and Eastern Mediterranean subregion. These are 38.3% of incoming international tourists and 65.8% of outgoing international tourists in 2019. For comparison, the current tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe forms 31.7% of the incoming tourists of Bulgaria, and only 16.8% of the outgoing tourist flows from Bulgaria were directed to it in 2019. Therefore, it can be summarized that Bulgaria not only territorially but also functionally belongs to the tourist subregion of Southern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean and its assignment to the tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe is artificial.

CONCLUSION

The studied indicators show that the most significant generators of tourist flows in the subregion are Russia and Poland. Russia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and Bulgaria receive the most tourists. The largest revenues are from international tourism in Poland, Russia, Hungary, the Czech Republic. The review of the current state of tourism in the current tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe leads to the conclusion that the differences between the countries in the subregion are more than the similarities. A similarity and a unifying factor for the countries of the tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe is their common historical past in the so-called Eastern bloc from the time of the Cold War. This fact still predetermines lower price levels, but also lower tourism efficiency in these countries compared to other parts of Europe. However, the socialist past passed more than three decades ago during which the countries are already members of various international organizations and supranational structures and therefore develop in different ways. This inevitably affects their socio-economic characteristics, including the peculiarities of their international tourism. Today there are significant differences in all considered indicators between the countries of the subregion. Revenues from international tourism, revenues per tourist and tourism efficiency are higher in the countries of the western part of the current tourist subregion of Central and Eastern Europe.

Countries located in the eastern part are just beginning to develop their international tourism more intensively, which is associated with a higher growth of international tourist arrivals, as well as higher growth of revenues from international tourism. They have significant tourism resource potential. A favorable prerequisite for them is the proximity of the largest Asian generator of tourist flows, namely China. The observed heterogeneity, as well as the large territorial scope of the region, including large parts not only in Europe but also in Asia, are the main markers showing the need for transformation of the subregion according to modern realities.

The new Central and Eastern European tourism subregion should include European countries, as well as Russia and the Caucasus republics. Bulgaria should belong to the tourist subregion of Southern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean, not only because of its location on the Balkan Peninsula, which is part of Southern Europe, but also because of the connection of the tourism industry of Bulgaria with the countries of Southern Europe. The Central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) should form their own tourist subregion of Central Asia, not only because of their location in Central Asia, but also because of the presence of sufficient common features and the growth of tourism in them. The Central Asian tourist subregion should be part of the Asia-Pacific tourist region.

The proposed new division guarantees continuity with the current division of tourist subregions, on the one hand. On the other hand, the new division will be in line with modern realities and future prospects and will therefore more accurately reflect the current state of international tourism and ongoing processes. Accordingly, the new division will be more functionally suitable for observations, analyzes and forecasts as far as international tourism is concerned.

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