

THE IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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Abstract: *Despite numerous anthropogenic and natural advantages, the development of tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH) is very slow. The specificity of the state organization in terms of the two-entity division significantly contributes to the slowing down of the progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the field of tourism. In addition to the slower implementation of institutional and legal provisions, the tourism sector faces a significant lack of financial resources that, if used adequately, would significantly improve the destination's competitive position. In accordance with the European determination, various forms of financing initiated by the European Union (EU) are available to Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

The subject of this paper is the analysis of funds that are available to Bosnia and Herzegovina through various programs and forms of cross-border cooperation. The main goal of this analysis is to point out the missing funds in the national framework and the importance of the networking process with the region. In addition, the paper provides a comparative analysis of two program periods of EU regional policy, 2014-2020. and 2021-2027. years. In accordance with the subject and goal of the research, careful methodological settings result in concluding considerations, which are listed in a separate part of the paper.

Key words: *tourism, Bosnia and Herzegovina, regional policy, European Union*

JEL classification: *Z3, R11, O52*

1. BASIC INDICATIONS OF REGIONAL TOURISM POLICY IN EU

The development of the EU's regional policy is even linked to the establishment of the European Community and the creation of a common market, when the Union was finding new methods to reduce the gap in development and legal adaptation of the countries that joined the community⁸. Regional inequalities were the key threat to the creation of a single European market (Vojnović, 2008, p. 368). The regional policy of the EU represents the basic instrument of the Union, which strives to achieve the equality of economic and social development of the member countries. Although it was originally intended only for member states, the scope of its activities has expanded so that certain programs help both candidate and potential candidate countries. Especially in the regional context, the cohesion policy through which tourism played a strategic role in reducing regional differences is significant (Brandano and Crociata, 2023, p. 764). Certain scientific works indicate that domestic tourism is a more significant instrument for strengthening regional territorial cohesion, especially for less developed regions (Rodriguez, Olmo and Jurado,

⁸ Already in the period of the Treaty of Rome (1957), the first steps towards regional solidarity were taken. Namely, the preamble of the Treaty of Rome emphasizes "that the member states of the Economic Community should strive to reduce the differences that exist in the degree of development of certain regions and the backwardness of less privileged regions".

2021, p. 1320). Some authors believe that the European Union, as a creator, expected too much from regional policy: reducing inequality between regions, increasing efficiency at the national and European levels, and reducing inequality between countries (Martin, 1999, p.14). On the other hand, some authors scientifically proved the effectiveness of EU regional policy. In support of the fact that most of the projects implemented through regional policy create positive effects on the economic growth of the recipient regions, it can be stated: expenses through EU structural and cohesion funds caused positive average effects on the growth of income per capita in sub-national regions that lagged behind the EU average. In addition, more costs generally did not produce proportionally larger effects (Becker, Egler and Ehrlich, 2018, p.144). Practice has so far shown that the effects of regional policy are significantly lower where institutions are corrupt and where human capital is incompetent. It is important to point out that the EU mandates respect for the principle of subsidiarity in the context of regional policy, which is synonymous with national sovereignty and implies that the Union acts only when it is considered that actions at its level will be more effective than at the national level. In this sense, national tourism organizations gain freedom (Spicker, 1991, p.3). In most of the policies implemented within the European Union countries, the national authorities had authority in terms of decision-making and institutional reorganization, tourism policy was formed gradually, through three phases. First, in the 1980s, the European Community adopted documents that partially solve tourism issues, so that such initiatives would result in a joint action plan for member states that was aimed at intensifying the exchange of tourist information and raising the quality of services in tourism, affirming village and rural tourism, protecting from unfair competition and the like. The second phase of the development of European tourism policy begins with the ratification of the Maastricht Agreement, which proclaimed the importance of tourism for the national economies of the member states, employment, regional revitalization of rural areas, strengthening of the social-cultural process, etc. The second phase of the development of European tourism policy was marked by numerous programs - Philoxenia, Cards, Sapard, Culture 2000 and others. The establishment of the Stabilization and Association Process in 2000 is of special importance for Bosnia and Herzegovina from this second phase. European tourism policy was officially institutionalized by Article 6 of the Treaty of Lisbon, emphasizing the need for regional cooperation and the importance of information

exchange (Estol, Camilleri and Font, 2018, p. 426). The Lisbon Treaty of 2007 established a policy that explicitly addressed the tourism sector (Estol and Font, 2015, p. 427). The third phase of the development of European tourism policy continues today. Through this phase, the Union has created the conditions for a discussion on the official implementation of tourism policies for countries with the status of potential candidates for membership. The EU approaches the tourism sector in a holistic way, taking into account that all actors have aligned goals. The objectives of tourism policy in the third stage of development are focused on attracting more tourists with higher consumption, improving the quality of services, reducing seasonality while applying the postulate of sustainable tourism (Akehurst, Bland and Nevin, 1993, p. 43). In particular, competitiveness in terms of improving the image and profile of European tourist destinations should be singled out as a goal. This is only possible if those destinations also have a quality environment (Cismaru and Ispas, 2015, p. 87). These goals of improving the tourist market are also implemented in pre-accession aid programs for countries that do not yet have member status.

2. REGIONAL POLICY INSTRUMENTS WITH A FOCUS ON THE PRE-ACCESSION COUNTRIES

There are various forms of aid for the development and legal and economic adjustment of countries that are not yet members of the EU. Some of them are classic financial institutions that play the role of lenders, while others are exclusively instruments of regional policy. EBRD, EIB and CEB can be singled out as significant financial institutions. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development - EBRD, in which Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a member since 1996. The areas that the EBRD covers with its investments are: agribusiness, capital market, financial institutions, information and communication technologies, legal reforms, communal infrastructure, natural resources, nuclear safety, energy, real estate and tourism. So far, the EBRD has facilitated a total of 222 projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, some of which indirectly strengthen the tourism sector. EIB - European Investment Bank which, in cooperation with the European Investment Fund, provides significant funds for small and medium-sized enterprises in various sectors, including indirectly tourism. So far, about 58 different projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been financed on this basis. It is also important to mention the European Central Bank - CEB as a multilateral bank that mostly plays the role of a lender for various sectors (small and medium-

sized enterprises, public administration, higher education, etc.) The following are the main instruments of fiscal regional policy: the European Regional Development Fund - ERDF, the European Social Fund - ESF and the European Cohesion Fund - EKF. Together with the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), they form the European Structural and Cohesion Funds (ESI). The ERDF, ESF and EKF funds are intended for the implementation of cohesion policy, with the first two referring to assistance to all EU regions, while the Cohesion Fund is intended only for less developed regions. A special form of assistance is provided for rural and coastal areas through the remaining two funds. The main goals of these funds are: convergence, regional competitiveness and employment, and territorial cooperation (Mirić, 2009, p. 36). The largest part of the support is directed to the member states, i.e. their regions whose GDP is below 75% of the average GDP of the European

Union. The funds are intended for EU member countries, their regions and transnational Euroregions. Countries in the status of potential candidates and candidates for EU membership do not have the right to use funds from structural and cohesion funds.

2.1. PRE-ACCESSION AID PROGRAMS - IPA I, II AND III

So far, IPA programs have been implemented through three phases, with the third one underway. The first phase of IPA pre-accession assistance refers to the period from 2007-2013. year and was created with the aim of facilitating the process of accession of EU countries. In accordance with its status, Bosnia and Herzegovina was entitled to funds from the first two components, while countries with candidate status could use funds from all five components. The activities financed from the second component had special importance for tourism.

Table 1. IPA pre-accession programs

	IPA I 2007-2013.	IPA II 2014-2020.	IPA III 2021-2027.
Key components	Transition assistance and institution building Cross-border cooperation Regional development Development of human resources Rural development	Democracy and governance Rule of law and fundamental rights Competitiveness and innovation Education, employment and social policies Agriculture and rural development Environment and energy	Rule of law and democracy Good governance, alignment with the acquis, Green agenda and sustainable connectivity Competitiveness and growth Territorial and cross-border cooperation
Funds for Bosnia and Herzegovina (million euros)	517,805,176	539.6*	According to the achieved progress
Total funds for all states	9,467.188.992	10,683.5	14,162.5

Source: based on data available at: https://archive.europa.ba/?page_id=44274

In the period 2014-2020. In 2008, a new IPA II pre-accession aid instrument was created, which differs from the previous IPA due to the emphasized strategic focus of the documents accompanying the IPA II component, which integrate the development reform agendas of the countries. It was created by a new regulation in 2014 that introduces policy areas, to which potential candidate countries are also entitled, and not just candidates as before. The third pre-accession aid package IPA III differs from the previous two because the regulations stipulate that the allocation of total funds is not based on pre-

defined criteria per country, but according to the degree of progress achieved by the beneficiary countries.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TERRITORIAL COOPERATION PROGRAM FOR TOURISM IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The improvement of regional competitiveness in BH tourism is carried out through cross-border and territorial cooperation programs, which function within the framework of the IPA program, whose third program package IPA III is currently being implemented. Very often,

investments in the tourism sector are not direct through priority axes, but by investing in other thematic priorities spillover effects are achieved. Bosnia and Herzegovina participates in a total of 6 programs of territorial cooperation that ensure the strengthening of coordination in the cross-border, transnational and inter-regional domain. For each of the programs, a comparative analysis will be made that includes 2014-2020. program period and current from 2021-2027. years.

Interreg IPA cross-border cooperation program Croatia- Bosnia and Herzegovina-Montenegro 2014-2020. is a program that was created as a continuation of bilateral programs (Croatia-Montenegro, Croatia-BH) that were modified into a trilateral one between Croatia-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Montenegro that unites the cross-

border cooperation of all three countries. The program includes 12 counties on the territory of Croatia, 109 municipalities on the territory of BH and 10 municipalities on the territory of Montenegro. Croatia carries the most significant part of the activity with regard to its tourism industry - about 25% of GDP generation, with over 94 million tourist overnight stays in 2019. Bosnia and Herzegovina is also on an upward trajectory in tourism, whose total contribution to GDP is around 10.2%. The importance of tourism in Montenegro, which has 4 cultural properties under the protection of UNESCO, is unquestionable. Tourism generates about 24% of Montenegrin GDP.

Table 2. Interreg IPA cross-border cooperation program CRO-BH-MNE

Priority	2014-2020.	millions euros	2021-2027.	millions euros
1	Health and social protection	8.573.297	Smart investments in research, innovation and competitive entrepreneurship	23.540.000
2	Environmental Protection	14.288.830	Green investments in environmental protection, circular economy	46.010.000
3	Development of tourism	17.146.595	Accessible and resilient health services	19.250.000
4	Strengthening competitive.	11.431.063	Sustainable and inclusive tourism and culture	18.187.000
Total		51,439.785*		106.987.000*

Source: based on the data available at <http://www.interreg-hr-ba-me2014-2020.eu/cooperation-programme/programme-facts>

The amounts in the table are of an informative nature and have been increased for state support, which is binding as a form of co-financing. Program in the period 2014-2020. In two calls for applications, it included around 59 projects with over 249 partners.

The BH-Montenegro cross-border cooperation program is an instrument for easier rapprochement with the EU, reducing the regional and administrative differences that exist in two neighboring countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. So far, it has been implemented in two project periods, and the third one is underway. The general program goal refers to the sustainable development of the cross-border area,

and it is also aimed at achieving the goals of "sustainable, inclusive, integrated and smart growth", as well as economic, social and territorial cohesion. The third priority axis refers to the affirmation of tourism, and the promotion and improvement of cultural and natural heritage, and the funds for this axis in the amount of 85% are financed by the EU, which is approximately EUR 2,964,705.88. The program is implemented in 56 municipalities in BiH and 14 municipalities in Montenegro. For the program period 2021.-2027. approximately the same funds are foreseen in the amount of about 8,400,000 million euros.

Table 3. BH-MNE Cross-Border Cooperation Program 2014-2020.(million €)

Thematic priorities	IPA II CBC Bosnia and Herzegovina - Montenegro 2014-2020			
	Union support	State support	Total funding	% EU
TP1: Promotion of employment, social and cultural inclusion across the border;	2 100 000.00	370 588.23	2 470 588.23	85%
TP2: Environmental protection, promotion of climate change mitigation, management;	2 940 000.00	518 823.53	3 458 823.53	85%
TP3: Encouraging tourism, cultural and natural heritage.	2 520 000.00	444 705.88	2 964 705.88	85%
Total:	8 400 000.00	1 334 117.64	9 734 117.64	

Source: based on the data available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/instruments/funding-by-country/bosnia-herzegovina_en

The *Serbia-BH* cross-border cooperation program is a cross-border cooperation program dating from the 2007.-2013. budget period and continued in the period 2014.-2020. years. The program aims to increase the competitiveness of cross-border areas, and create social and economic cohesion

through activities that improve physical, business, and institutional infrastructure. The table below shows the indicative financial allocation of funds by priority areas for the period 2014.-2020.

Table 4. SRB-BH cross-border cooperation program 2014-2020. (million euros)

Thematic priorities (tp)	IPA II CBC Bosnia and Herzegovina – Serbia 2014-2020			
	Union support	State support	Total funding	% EU
TP1: Promotion of employment, labor mobility and social and cultural inclusion	3 500000,00	617 647.06	4 117 647.06	85%
TP2: Environmental protection, promotion of climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk management;	4 900000.00	864 705.88	5 764 705.88	85%
TP3: Encouraging tourism, cultural and natural heritage.	4 200000.00	741 176.47	4 941 176.47	85%
TP4: Technical assistance	1 400000.00	0.00	1 400 000.00	100%
Total:	14 000000.00	2 223529.41	16 223 529.41	

Source: based on the data available at <http://srb-bih.org/en/sample-page/teorija-obuhvacena-programom/>

The continuation of cross-border cooperation between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina is supported through two thematic priorities in the program period 2021-2027. years: T1- Investing in youth, education and skills and T2- Encouraging

tourism, cultural and natural heritage. Thematic priorities have defined specific goals, expected results and indicative lists of activities. The total planned investments by the Union are 14,000,000 euros.

Table 5. BH-SRB cross-border cooperation projects that are ongoing, in the field of tourism

Project name	Total value of the project (€)
Developing rural tourism as a basis for the future sustainable development of the cross-border area of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina	339,971.00
New locations for outdoor recreation in order to improve the quality of the tourist product - Open Air Everywhere	394.082,03
Experience the Roman heritage on the Drina and the Sava - the Route of the Roman Emperors	382,926.25
Eco tourism in the cross-border area of Serbia-BiH - Bird watching across the border	209,847.46
Via Dinarica: The green path beyond borders	337,555.55
Together for cultural tourism - Cross-border cooperation for the improvement of socio-economic development and the preservation of traditional handicrafts	322,205.89

Source: based on the data available at <https://srb-bih.org/ba/bosnian-baza-projekta/>

The *Adriatic Ionian Transnational Cooperation Program* (Interreg ADRION) was created as a form of transnational cooperation between a number of countries surrounding the Adriatic and Ionian Seas. A total of 8 countries participated in the ADRION program: Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia and non-members of the EU-BH, Serbia,

Albania and Montenegro. Projects are financed from the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) for member countries and from the IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance) for non-member countries, while part of the budget is also national co-financing.

Table 6. Adriatic-Ionian Program 2014-2020. (millions of euros)

ADRION	ERDF	IPA	State support	Total
Priority Zone 1: A smart region	16.693.547	2.998.111	3.475.815	23.167.473
Priority Zone 2: Greener and climatic region	38.395.155	7.077.221	8.024.538	53.496.914
Priority zone 3: Connection	15.024.191	2.684.333	3.125.034	20.833.558
Total	70.112.893	12.759.665	14.625.387	97.497.945

Source: based on the data available at <https://www.adrioninterreg.eu/index.php/library/programme-document/>

The mentioned total investments are increased for the fourth priority zone - Support for the implementation of the EUSAIR strategy for the fifth zone - Technical assistance, so that the total

budget for the program period for all countries amounts to 118 million euros.

Table 7. List of approved projects with partners from Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the period 2014-2020.

Call for projects	Total budget for partners from Bosnia and Herzegovina - million euros
First call	1.297.007,011
Second call	153.225,00
Third call	554.738,00
fourth call	73.651,00
Fifth call	355.732,50

Source: based on the data available at <https://www.dei.gov.ba/hr/interreg-jadransko-jonski-program-transnacionalne-suradnje-adrion>

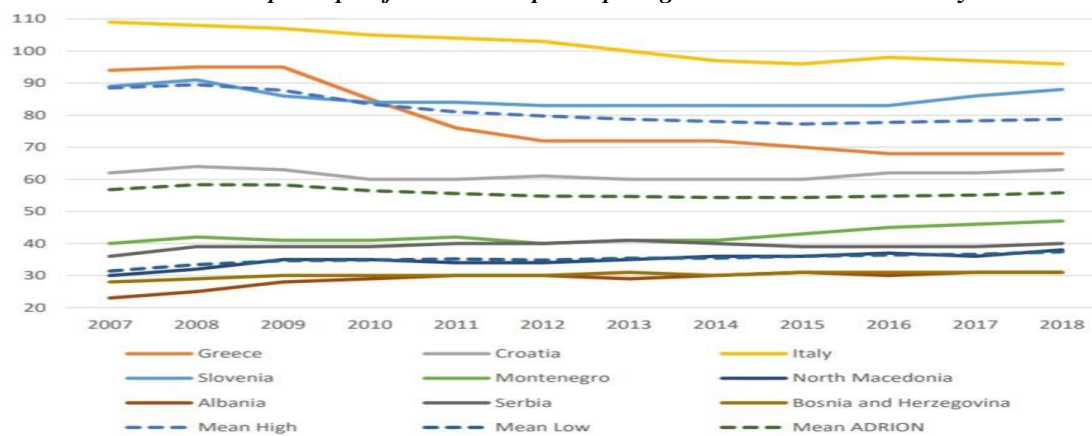
When it comes to this program for the period 2021-2027. year, the focus of the program was placed on countering the negative effects caused by the COVID pandemic, especially in the tourism sector, in which the number of tourist arrivals

dropped by as much as 73% (IPA Adrion, p. 11). As many as 72 places of world cultural heritage recognized by UNESCO are located in the countries covered by the program. The estimated budget of the IPA Adrion program is EUR 160

million, with a note that the list of countries has been modified for the 2021.-2027. program period. Countries are categorized into three categories - high-income EU countries (Italy, Greece, Slovenia), middle-income countries (Croatia) and countries with low per capita income (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia,

Montenegro and Serbia). The graph shows the fluctuation in terms of realized GDP, according to the development of the country. For example, Croatia's GDP makes up about 60% of GDP per capita in the EU27, while the same indicator for BH makes up only about 30% compared to the EU27.

Chart 1. GDP per capita for countries participating in IPA Adria 2021-2027. years



Source: based on the data available at <https://www.adrioninterreg.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ADRION-territorial-analysis-post-2020-Appendix-final-approved.pdf>

Transnational cooperation program Interreg Danube 2014.-2020. (Danube program) is a transnational cooperation program created with the aim of reducing the differences between the countries that geographically belong to the area of the Danube basin and the mountainous area of the Carpathians, the Balkans and part of the Alps. This program has the largest number of

participating countries, a total of 14 countries: 9 EU members, 3 IPA countries and two ENI partner countries. Beneficiaries are all stakeholders and organizations that can benefit from the program, universities, non-governmental organizations, media houses, relevant authorities operating in the respective priority zones.

Priority	Budget by zone	Total budget	
		a) EU support	b) State support
Priority zone 1 Innovative and responsible business.	75.980.561 €	ERDF: 202.095.405,00 €	42.653.480,00 €
Priority zone 2 Culture and environment	86.834.927 €	IPA II: 19.829.192,00 €	
Priority zone 3 Connectivity and energy responsibility	56.985.422 €	ENI: 10.000.000,00 €	
Priority zone 4 Good governance	35.276.689 €	Total EU: 231.924.597,00 €	
		Total a) + b)=	274.578.077,00 €

Table 8. Danube program 2014.-2020. total budget (millions of euros)

Source: based on the data available at: <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/about-dtp/programme-presentation>

Observed by invitations, in the first invitation for the delivery of projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina the total budget was 2,895,064.59 euros, in the second 1,068,853.50 euros, while in the third invitation the budget was 1,688,321.76 euros, in total (IPA + co-financing). Almost all

projects are closely related to tourism, and we can single out: FostIno, InnoXenia, Begin, Adrion 5 senses, Smart Heritage, CCI4tourism, Creatures, Adriaticaves Plus and many others. Investing in other projects brings benefits for the tourism sector as well, in terms of greater mobility,

infrastructural equipment, and cultural, archaeological and landscape promotion. Program period 2021.-2027. of this project has a budget of around EUR 215,047,857.00.

Transnational cooperation program Interreg Mediterranean is a positive practice of territorial cooperation in the area of 14 countries and 64 regions of the Mediterranean. Program period 2021-2027. year is supported by a total budget of around 294 million euros, which is placed through three priority axes: Smarter Mediterranean, Greener Mediterranean, Management of the Mediterranean. The program is closely related to the preservation and valorization of cultural heritage, the promotion of green zones, the creation of sustainable tourism and numerous activities in the domain of maritime tourism. Essentially, the goal of this program is to significantly improve the Mediterranean region, which shows a lower average GDP per capita, a lower employment rate and a lower innovation index than the EU average.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of regional policy is controlled by the EU institutions, with the key role played by the European Commission, which approves funding programs for member states and compiles a cohesive report on the implementation of funded programs every third year. For the purposes of comparing regions and easier monitoring of regional development, a hierarchical system for the classification of spatial units in the member states of the European Union (NUTS) was designed. For regions that do not have EU membership, there is support in legislative adjustment and strengthening of institutional capacities and creation of a more competitive economy, through programs of territorial and cross-border cooperation. With the aim of allocation, redistribution and stabilization of pre-accession regions, the program is available to many countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, through various thematic priorities. The special importance of these programs for Bosnia and Herzegovina is the multidimensionality of investments, which cover different spheres of business or legislation. When it comes specifically to tourism, it is not possible to specify the funds invested in that sector, because by investing in other sectors there is a spillover of economic effects that can often be greater than the specific investment. Of particular importance are the third program packages related to the period 2021.-2027. year, because they significantly mitigate the negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which were particularly pronounced in the tourism sector. Covid brought a

drop in direct contribution to GDP to tourism in BH from 2.5 to 1.5%, a drop in income by more than 50%, as well as a drop in bookings at the global level by more than 70%. Through the programs, special focus is placed on strengthening cultural integrity, a greener and more connected region, and decarbonization.

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