

SPECIFIC RELATIONS IN THE CROSS-BORDER PASSENGER TRAFFIC AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN SOUTHEAST SERBIA

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Abstract

Passenger traffic between Serbia and Bulgaria operates through six border crossing points, one of which is rail. Not so long ago, there were more border crossing points between the two countries, fluctuations of the local population were far greater, but the depopulation of the border area between Serbia and Bulgaria over time resulted in the need to close these crossing points. Dynamic political events on the Balkan Peninsula during the 20th and 21st century have made the border crossing points to be separation points rather than meeting points of the two nations. Besides depopulation, the border area is characterized by extreme economic underdevelopment. The border area of Southeast Serbia in contemporary development plans is commonly recognized as an area suitable for tourism development, where the transit position plays one of the most important roles.

Key words: Southeast Serbia, Bulgaria, tourism, border, passenger traffic.

СПЕЦИФИЧНОСТИ ОДНОСА ПРЕКОГРАНИЧНОГ ПРОМЕТА ПУТНИКА И РАЗВОЈА ТУРИЗМА ЈУГОИСТОЧНЕ СРБИЈЕ

Апстракт

Промет путника између Србије и Бугарске одвија се преко шест граничних прелаза, од којих је један железнички. У не тако давној прошлости, између две државе било је више граничних прелаза, флукуација домаћег становништва била је далеко већа, али је депопулација пограничних простора и Србије и Бугарске временом довела до потребе за гашењем ових прелаза. Динамична политичка дешавања на простору Балканског полуострва, током XX и XXI века, учинила су да гранични прелази чешће буду места раздвајања, него места спајања два народа. Поред депопулације, погранични простор карактерише и изразита економска неразвијеност. Погранични простор југоисточне Србије се у

савременим развојним плановима, све чешће препознаје као простор погодан за развој туризма, при чему транзитни положај игра једну од значајних улога.

Кључне речи: Југоисточна Србија, Бугарска, туризам, граница, промет путника

INTRODUCTION

The countries of eastern and south-eastern Europe have had the biggest share of problems in the creation of new international borders within Europe over the last decade. Tightening of border controls usually occurred at the borders between the countries which do not belong to the European Union and their new EU neighbours (Slovenia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria). The modern rigid border policy is even more evident if one considers generally liberal border contacts among neighbouring countries, which were valid until the end of the 1980s, or the fall of the Soviet bloc. This example of the changes in the border policy was valid at the border with Bulgaria until the end of 2009, when previously required travel visas for citizens of Serbia were abolished.

The border with Bulgaria is mostly mountainous land. There are five functional border crossings with Bulgaria: Mokranje, Vrška čuka, Gradina, Strežimirovci, and Ribarci, as well as one railway crossing – Dimitrovgrad. In July, August, and September passenger traffic is by far the busiest and constitutes over 60% of total annual traffic, while in January, February, and March only 10% of passengers cross the border (Stanković, 1991).

The Serbian-Bulgarian border stretches across 360.4 km mainly in the north-south direction (www.mup.gov.rs). The northernmost point represents the confluence of the Veliki Timok into the Danube. Following the mid-stream of the Veliki Timok, the border stretches to the south, to the village of Veljkovo (Negotin), where it moves to the right bank of the Timok and continues to the south, over low hills, to the border crossing Vrška čuka. From this point the border contains mountainous land, mostly following the watershed on Stara Planina and stretching towards the southeast. Near the village of Senokos (Dimitrovgrad), the border turns to the southwest and retains the same direction until the village of Gornja Nevlja (Dimitrovgrad), where it turns west. From the village of Vuči Del (Babušnica), the border line generally maintains the orientation towards the south, to the border of Serbia, Bulgaria, and Macedonia, near the village of Žeravino (Bosilegrad). With the exception of the northern part, which is covered in lowland and hills, the Serbian-Bulgarian border can be said to have an extremely mountainous character.

This paper discusses the four municipalities of Southeast Serbia: Babušnica, Crna Trava, Surdulica, and Bosilegrad. Unlike the border municipalities of East Serbia, Southeast Serbia municipalities have not had significant tourist traffic until now, and they still suffer from a lack of tourist

organizations, inadequate development of tourism material basis, bad roads, etc. In contrast, border municipalities of Southeast Serbia have preserved the environment as well as old authentic rural architecture and have a significant potential for mountain tourism. Therefore, we felt it was necessary to study the aforementioned areas, more precisely, their location and passenger traffic at border crossings, in order to more accurately determine the real potential of tourism development. In addition to the data published in the professional literature by various authors, the paper also provides the internal data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but only up to 2009, as more recent data are not available.

The paper presents a historical account of cross-border traffic of passengers between Serbia (Yugoslavia) and Bulgaria, as well as changes in the customs and border policy. In addition to cross-border traffic, this paper deals with the issue of tourist transport in the studied municipalities.

THE HISTORICAL ROLE OF THE SERBIAN-BULGARIAN BORDER IN THE CONTEXT OF CHANGES IN THE CROSS-BORDER TRAFFIC OF PASSENGERS

The border with Bulgaria was established in Neuilly (France) in 1919 and confirmed in 1947, after the end of World War II. The formation of the border between Serbia and Bulgaria was followed by territorial claims on both sides. The biggest controversy arose regarding Sopluk, the area around the river Iskra, in relation to which the attitude of the Yugoslav delegation at the Paris peace conference in 1919 was that it geographically, politically, and economically belonged to the Kingdom of SCS. Jovan Cvijić, although a member of the Serbian delegation, believed that Serbia was not entitled to a larger part of the territory, primarily because of the ethnic composition, so that, in the end, the greater part of the territory remained in Bulgaria. From the peace conference until today, the border with Bulgaria remained unchanged (Rodić, 1991).

The biggest problem in cross-border cooperation is related to the issue of land ownership of the Serbian population in Bulgaria. The citizens of Serbia and Macedonia had about 3,000 ha of arable land, pastures, and forests in the border zone inside the territory of Bulgaria, while Bulgarian citizens owned about 1,400 ha of land in Serbian and Macedonian territory. Bulgarian citizens never ceased to cultivate their land in Serbian and Macedonian territory, while the property of Serbian and Macedonian citizens in Bulgaria was nationalized in 1950. Serbia did not nationalize the land of Bulgarian citizens, although it was entitled to it according to the principle of reciprocity, for which Serbian diplomacy was heavily criticized.

The relations on the border between Serbia and Bulgaria were under greatest strain from 1948 to 1953, when there was always a risk of the invading armies of the Warsaw Pact. This situation caused the increasing

insecurity of the border municipalities, the intensification of underdevelopment by transferring industrial plants into the interior, as well as the persecution of the Serbian minority in the neighbouring countries, mainly Bulgaria and Romania, and its assimilation. Unfortunately, only towards the end of the last century did Serbia show any interest in the Serbian population outside its borders, which had largely lost its national identity (Stojković, 1991).

The situation in the border traffic between Serbia and Bulgaria in the recent past has changed several times depending on the political, economic, and other factors, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. When the UN declared 1967 to be the International Tourist Year, Yugoslavia abolished visas to all the countries in the world. In October of the following year that decision was abolished, whereas, from 1971, Yugoslavia liberalized its visa regime in such a way that the citizens of 40 countries were allowed tourist stay without a visa, while the citizens of other countries were allowed to obtain a visa at their respective embassies without too many formalities. In the period from 1982 to 1984, the citizens of Yugoslavia were required to lay down a deposit before leaving the country. This decision largely influenced the decrease in departures of our population to neighbouring countries. Thus, in the year prior to this decision, the number of passengers to Bulgaria amounted to 951,642, and in 1983 the number of passengers rapidly decreased to 123,959. Upon the termination of deposit liabilities in 1985, the number increased to 1,052,301 passengers (Stanković, 1992).

War conflicts on the territory of former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s caused changes in tourist movement, both of domestic and foreign tourists, towards Yugoslav destinations. In late 1991, an obligation for all men between 18 and 60 years of age was introduced whereby they were to seek special approval from the military authorities to travel abroad. This policy adversely affected the departures of Serbian citizens abroad.

At the same time the obligation was introduced for the passengers from East European countries that when entering Yugoslavia they must change 200 dollars at the official exchange rate. If we take into account the financial abilities of such population, it is clear to which extent this decision negatively influenced tourism trends in Serbia. Similar decisions were adopted by Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria for the population of Yugoslavia. Passengers were required to exchange \$30 at the official exchange rate and buy petrol only for convertible currencies. Both sides abolished the aforementioned conditions in 1992, which led to a significant increase in the number of passengers at border crossings.

Regarding cross-border relations with Bulgaria, as well as with other countries in the region, Serbia had more or less successful cooperation. The adopted laws mainly referred to all countries, although there were several regulations that were specific to the border with Bulgaria. In 1986, Bulgaria

adopted a law under which the border crossings with Serbia, Dimitrovgrad (railway) and Gradina (road), would operate all year round, 24 hours a day, while other crossings would operate only during the day, and may be used only by the citizens of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria (Stanković, 1992).

TRENDS IN THE NUMBER OF PASSENGERS AT BORDER CROSSINGS

Passenger traffic at border crossings with Bulgaria during the last three decades primarily depended on economic and political developments on the level of SFR Yugoslavia (Republic of Serbia) and Bulgaria, as well as the Balkans and East Europe.

Between 1980 and 1985 there was a decline in the number of domestic passengers, which could be connected to the obligation to lay a deposit before leaving the country. After the period of increase in the number of passengers until 1990, there was a permanent reduction in the number of domestic passengers until 2009, which can be explained by the economic crisis and the sanctions during the 1990s, as well as Bulgaria's accession to the EU and the introduction of visas for the citizens of Serbia during the 2000s. The heaviest foreign passenger traffic was recorded in 1990, which was caused by the opening of Bulgaria and the collapse of the Soviet bloc. As regards tourist traffic, the number of foreign travellers who crossed the Serbian-Bulgarian border is of particular importance. The most significant increase in the number of foreign travellers by 2.5 times in the period from 2000 to 2009 did not equal the increase of 1990, but nevertheless showed a positive trend. The data on passenger traffic in the last five years cannot be obtained because they are considered an official secret and are available exclusively at the Ministry of Interior.

Looking at individual border crossings, there is a certain deviation, since the heaviest traffic of domestic and foreign travellers, including all the transitions except Gradina, was recorded in 1995. This phenomenon can be interpreted as the "flourishing of grey economy" or illegal trade in petroleum products, cigarettes, food, etc., as well as the arrival of the labour force from Bulgaria. Gradina border crossing, where around 90% of total traffic to Bulgaria passed in 1990, was the only one to record a drop in passenger traffic in 1995, due to sanctions and bypassing of Serbia by transit passengers and freight forwarding companies from abroad.

Passenger traffic at border crossings with Bulgaria

Border crossing	Year	Domestic	Foreign	Total
Mokranje	1980	56,823	10,247	67,070
	1985	37,812	1,838	39,650
	1990	89,444	779,135	868,579
	1995	47,985	2,041,595	2,089,580
	2000	13,175	157,118	170,293
	2009	4,855	103,598	108,453
Vrška čuka	1980	242,055	17,188	259,243
	1985	58,348	11,664	70,012
	1990	71,260	320,106	391,366
	1995	121,763	567,753	689,516
	2000	14,839	100,732	115,571
	2009	11,385	80,824	92,209
Gradina	1980	657,463	3,374,415	4,031,878
	1985	1,121,558	3,220,433	4,341,991
	1990	1,284,020	5,160,546	6,444,566
	1995	868,004	702,052	1,570,056
	2000	362,178	834,413	1,196,591
	2009	281,501	2,982,292	3,263,793
Dimitrovgrad (railway)	1980	36,664	374,629	411,293
	1985	29,697	276,317	306,014
	1990	80,482	572,969	653,451
	1995	251,213	352,007	603,220
	2000	37,972	133,296	171,268
	2009	13,958	117,684	131,642
Strežimirovci	1980	44,428	3,386	47,814
	1985	49,778	2,902	52,680
	1990	67,725	82,487	150,212
	1995	74,160	97,771	171,931
	2000	13,791	18,426	32,217
	2009	6,942	16,109	23,051
Ribarci	1980	44,603	5,464	50,067
	1985	25,828	4,381	30,209
	1990	37,973	19,463	57,436
	1995	112,788	198,793	311,581
	2000	21,038	26,394	47,432
	2009	18,786	24,727	43,513
All crossings	1980	1,751,161	3,894,580	5,645,741
	1985	1,323,021	3,517,535	4,840,556
	1990	1,630,904	6,934,706	8,565,610
	1995	1,475,913	3,959,971	5,435,884
	2000	462,993	1,270,379	1,733,372
	2009	337,427	3,325,234	3,662,661

Sources: Stanković, 1987 (for 1980, 1985, and 1990)

Passenger traffic, internal data of the Ministry of Interior (for 1995, 2000, and 2009)

The extent to which illegal economy took hold in the mid-1990s is best seen in the case of border crossing Ribarci, located in the municipality of Bosilegrad with a dominant Bulgarian population. At the aforementioned border crossing in 1995 the number of foreign travellers was ten times higher than five years before, while in 2000 it dropped by seven times and later continued its declining trend. The aforementioned increase in foreign travellers after 2000 is present only at the crossing Gradina, which clearly shows that it is transit tourists who choose the busiest border crossing in the C branch of the Corridor 10. At all other crossings, passenger traffic has a negative trend.

TOURIST TRAFFIC IN THE MUNICIPALITIES BORDERING BULGARIA

Bulgaria's accession to the EU in 2007 introduced new possibilities for tourism development in the country. Bulgaria is characterized by diverse natural and cultural heritage, and for this reason its border regions can be considered direct competitors in the tourism business. During the last decade, Bulgaria has invested significant resources into improving the tourism industry. The most intensive changes are noticeable on the Bulgarian coast and in the central mountainous region.

The creators of tourism in Bulgaria designed the basis of tourism development as well as the economy in the form of ecotourism, whose task is both the protection of nature and the development of a positive attitude of the population towards the environment. Bulgarian ecotourism concept is based on the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in the field of tourism and hospitality, situated in rural areas. The goal of this business is for ecotourism to create material effects to poor areas where the greatest concentration of eco-content is.

After 17 areas on the territory of Stara Planina, Bulgaria were declared protected, the idea to form a "Peace Park", with all the natural and cultural values, which would stretch on both sides of the border, re-emerged with the Bulgarian and Serbian parties. During 2002, in Pirot, an event called "Old Mountain – New Bridges" was organized with the aim to support the "Peace Park" project and to become a traditional gathering of tourist and cultural delegates from both sides (Gligorijević, Deverdžić).

Regarding the area occupied by the border municipalities of Southeast Serbia, the Serbian government has shown no significant interest in the promotion of tourism. Among the four tourist clusters, which are defined by the Tourism Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, one is the cluster of Southeast Serbia. Unfortunately, this cluster only partially addresses the four border municipalities. Significantly more attention was given to Sokobanja, Niš, and the general area north of the municipalities concerned. Only the area of Vlasina was identified in the strategy as a region of exceptional tourist

value. On the other hand, in the last ten years, since the strategy was created, there has been no significant government investment in the tourism sector in the area of Vlasina (Tourism Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2005).

According to the data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, tourist traffic in Serbia during 2013 numbers a total of 2,192,435 guests. Out of this number, 42% were foreign visitors.

Total tourist traffic, according to the number of guests, was slightly higher in comparison to 2000, but there was a change in the structure of guests, so the number of domestic tourists decreased by 34%, while the number of foreign visitors increased about five times.

Based on the data given in the table, we can track the movement of the number of tourists in the border municipalities of south Serbia, near Bulgaria. Despite some variations, there is a regular motion of passenger traffic in Serbia and in municipalities.

Looking at all administrative levels, tourist traffic reached its peak during the 1980s, which is consistent with a high degree of economic development of former Yugoslavia. After this period there was a civil war and overall economic decline, which negatively affected the tourist trade. The data from 2000 shows the dimensions of this decline, when the total number of tourists in the border zone was 2.5 times lower than in 1980, i.e. the number of foreign tourists was 3 times lower compared to 1990. After 2000, the decrease in the total tourist traffic continued, but there was an increase in foreign visitors (3 times more than in 1980). What may seem pessimistic is the fact that the biggest decrease was recorded in recent years, after 2007, constituting a total decrease in the number of tourists by 30% in 2013. This trend can be interpreted as a consequence of the global economic crisis and poor economic situation and weak financial abilities of the local population.

The largest percentage of foreign guests in the border zone was recorded in 2013, when it constituted 22.3% of the total number of tourists. The increase in the number of foreign tourists did not follow the same trend as the one on the national level. In addition, the share of foreign tourists was considerably lower than in the Republic of Serbia (in 2013 in the border zone there were 22.3%, while in Serbia there were 42% of foreign tourists). On the other hand, when comparing the data from 2013 to the year 2000 (1.9% of foreign visitors), the percentage of foreign visitors has increased tenfold. A fact that should not be ignored is the structure of foreign tourists and the sudden increase in the number of foreign visitors. After the war in former Yugoslavia, there was a change in statistical categorization, thus making yesterday's local guests become foreign ones (from Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, and, since 2006, Montenegro). It can therefore be concluded that, although the precise data is almost impossible to obtain, the guest structure has not changed so much, as it would initially seem, but due to political and administrative changes in former Yugoslavia, there has been a change in the statistical monitoring of the tourist flow.

Tourist traffic and the number of overnight stays in border municipalities

Municipality	Year	Domestic tourists	Foreign tourists	Total no. of tourists	The number of overnight stays (domestic)	The number of overnight stays (foreign)	The number of overnight stays (total)	Average number of overnight stays
Babušnica	1980	1,916	-	1,916	18,549	-	18,549	9.7
	1990	1,917	40	1,957	16,313	55	16,368	8.4
	2000	1,914	18	1,932	14,568	107	14,675	7.6
	2007	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	2013	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Crna Trava	1980	861	1	862	2,199	2	2,201	2.6
	1990	193	-	193	809	-	809	4.2
	2000	55	-	55	67	-	67	1.2
	2007	112	2	114	286	8	294	2.6
	2013	290	-	290	5,229	-	5,229	18.0
Surdulica	1980	13,768	363	14,131	32,448	1,667	34,115	2.4
	1990	8,819	263	9,082	33,295	482	33,777	3.7
	2000	4,844	115	4,959	27,043	2,143	29,186	5.9
	2007	5,631	879	6,510	24,402	2,685	27,087	4.2
	2013	2,563	917	3,480	6,446	1,478	7,924	2.3
Bosilegrad	1980	1,695	17	1,712	2,280	17	2,297	1.3
	1990	1,023	31	1,054	2,352	47	2,399	2.3
	2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	2007	116	112	228	530	367	897	3.9
	2013	872	155	1,027	2,423	256	2,679	2.6
Border municipalities	1980	18,240	381	18,621	55,476	1,686	57,162	3.1
	1990	11,952	334	12,286	52,769	5,84	53,353	4.3
	2000	6,813	133	6,946	41,678	2,250	43,928	6.3
	2007	5,859	993	6,852	25,218	3,060	28,278	4.1
	2013	3,725	1,072	4,797	14,098	1,734	15,832	3.3
The Republic of Serbia	1980	3,459,311	868,359	4,327,670	10,561,653	1,466,788	12,028,441	2.8
	1990	3,059,742	880,125	3,939,867	10,201,605	1,468,177	11,669,782	3.0
	2000*	2,003,549	165,676	2,169,225	7,265,197	431,093	7,696,290	3.5
	2007*	1,610,513	696,045	2,306,558	5,853,017	1,475,675	7,328,692	3.2
	2013*	1,270,667	921,768	2,192,435	4,579,067	1,988,393	6,567,460	3.0
The share of border municipalities in the tourist traffic of Serbia (%)	1980	0.5	0.04	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.5	-
	1990	0.4	0.04	0.3	0.5	0.04	0.5	-
	2000*	0.3	0.08	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.6	-
	2007*	0.4	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.4	-
	2013*	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.08	0.2	-

* without Kosovo and Metohija

Source: Municipalities in Serbia

Regarding monitored data at the municipal level, in the category of the total number of tourists, there are generally no significant differences although there are some fluctuations that are difficult to interpret (e.g. Bosilegrad had eight times more domestic tourists in 2013 than in 2007). Only in the municipality of Surdulica is there continuity in the work of hotels, and thus the tourist traffic. This is primarily the merit of hotels and other accommodation facilities on Vlasina Lake. Other municipalities have had interruptions in tourism, because there were years when hotels were not in operation, especially in the period of the transition from the public to the private sector. The smallest oscillations in tourist traffic in the period from 1980 to 2000 occurred in the municipality of Babušnica, which, unfortunately, has not had categorized accommodation capacities for the last ten years. On the other hand, the largest decline in the number of tourists in the period from 1980 to 2007 occurred in the municipality of Crna Trava (8 times less). In the category of foreign tourists, a noticeable increase occurred in Bosilegrad and Surdulica, while Crna Trava never had any foreign tourists (only 2 in 2007).

The municipality of Babušnica, according to the data from 2007 and 2013, holds no records of visits, considering the fact that the town hotel "Crni Vrh" and hotel "Mir" in Zvonačka Banja, are currently not working. The municipality of Bosilegrad has been reintroduced into the tourist traffic of the border zone since 2003, through the privatization of the hotel "Dukat".

The information related to the total number of overnight stays by municipalities shows that the largest number of overnight stays was recorded in the municipalities of Babušnica (until 2000) and Surdulica, which is closely related to the visitors of Zvonačka Banja or Vlasina Lake and their longer use of hotel services.

The share of the four border municipalities in Southeast Serbia in the national tourist traffic is minor. This is the only statistical category which can be said to have undergone no significant change from 1980 until today. The share of passengers who stay in the municipalities bordering Bulgaria, compared to the national territory, is expressed in parts per thousand or ten parts per thousand; therefore, the significance of these municipalities in the tourism economy of the Republic of Serbia cannot even be considered.

CONCLUSION

Tourist traffic in the border area should increase in subsequent years, provided that the current trend continues. An increase in the number of foreign tourists should be expected after the construction of the motorway on Corridor 10 and the C branch of the corridor. In addition, the completion of the privatization process of catering and accommodation facilities will contribute to the improvement of tourism business.

A better inter-state cooperation and greater fluctuation of passengers should be expected as a consequence of the creation of the Euroregion, whose aim is to promote economic and cultural relations, as well as to coordinate the economic development of neighbouring countries, create a region attractive for investors, establish cultural and scientific cooperation, support environmental programs, aid the understanding of different cultures, and so on.

In the border regions of Serbia, five Euroregions were founded, two of which include border municipalities of Southeast Serbia towards Bulgaria. Euroregion Eurobalkans, Niš-Sofia- Skopje, was founded in 2002, following the initiative of the three above mentioned cities, and for the purpose of their better cooperation. This region has 3.5 million inhabitants in 80 cities, which gravitate towards these centres. This Euroregion includes all the municipalities bordering Bulgaria, except Negotin. The Euroregion mainly relies on Corridor H and the entire development policy is primarily based on the exploitation of this European corridor, which is of great importance for the transit tourism (Todorović et al., 2004). Likewise, it can be expected that the Neighbourhood Programme, as a new form of cross-border cooperation between EU Member States and countries outside the EU (in this case, Serbia and Bulgaria), will affect the increase in the tourist movement and prosperity of the border areas (Stojanović i Manić, 2009).

We should not neglect the unenviable economic, as well as political and strategic, position of these municipalities within the national territory. In addition, the demographics of this area is one of the worst in Serbia, with areas where the average age of the population often exceeds 60, and its population is only a few tenths.

All of the above suggests that the municipalities of Babušnica, Crna Trava, Surdulica, and Bosilegrad have significant potential for development and improvement, of both transit and other forms of tourism, but also a number of disadvantages, which can be mitigated or eliminated only at the initiative and commitment of government bodies, since the current efforts of municipal and regional authorities have not given significant results.

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СПЕЦИФИЧНОСТИ ОДНОСА ПРЕКОГРАНИЧНОГ ПРОМЕТА ПУТНИКА И РАЗВОЈА ТУРИЗМА ЈУГОИСТОЧНЕ СРБИЈЕ

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Резиме

Граница између Србије и Бугарске је копнена и углавном планинског карактера. У функцији је пет граничних друмских прелаза: Мокрање, Вршка чука, Градина, Стрезимировци и Рибарци, као и једини железнички, код Димитровграда. Граница између Србије и Бугарске установљена је мировним споразумом у француском граду Неју, 1919. године, након завршетка Првог светског рата. Иако граница није етничка, између ове две земље није било значајнијих политичких конфликта. Циљ рада је да представи утицај кретања броја путника на граничним прелазима, на развој туристичке привреде у српским пogrаничним општинама југоисточне Србије. Радом су обухваћене четири општине (Бабушница, Црна Трава, Сурдулица и Босилеград), које су уједно и једне од најнеразвијених општина Србије. Подаци приказани у табелама, прате кретање броја

путника на граничним прелазима у периоду од 1980. до 2009. године. Мада је дошло до значајних измена у броју и структури путника, на националном нивоу, на примеру проучаваних општина није било значајнијих помака. Граничне општине југоисточне Србије имају велики потенцијал, превасодно у сфери еко-туризма, а положај у близини Коридора X, представља један од најважнијих предуслова даљег развоја туризма. Обзиром да је реч о неразвијеним општинама, са врло озбиљним економским и демографским проблемима, потребна је интервенција државе како би се наведени проблеми отклонили или барем ублажили. Досадашњи напори општинских власти да самостално исправе недостатке, нису дали значајније резултате.