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Sociological Study on the Natural and Cultural Heritage in the Cross-border Area of Dolj, Olt, Mehedinti (RO) - Vidin, Montana, Vratsa, and Pleven (BG)

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I. Introduction and Presentation of Study Achievement Context

This study is drafted in the context of implementing the NATBIOT project - “Natural heritage - natural/bio resources’ services” (*Financing contract No.: 82688/18.07.2018; Project Code: ROBG - 356*), implemented by Romanian Movement for Quality (RMQ), financed via the INTERREG V-A Romania-Bulgaria Programme, Priority Axis: 2 - “A green region”, Specific goal: 2.1 - “To improve the sustainable use of natural heritage and resources and cultural heritage”.

The period for implementing the Project is 18 months as of July 31st, 2018.

The goal of the NATBIOT project - “Natural heritage - natural/ bio resources services” is to create innovative NATBIOT brand tourist products, as well as to improve the quality and marketing services in tourism, which lead to sustainably use the natural and cultural heritage in the targeted cross-border area: Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți (RO) - Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven (BG).

The main goal pursued in drafting the study is to collect and interpret the required information in order to get an overall image on the natural and cultural heritage in the targeted cross-border area. The analysis presented in the study will be thus used to reach the general goal targeted in the project.

The study includes a comprehensive analysis of the most representative resources in the natural and cultural heritage in the targeted areas, as well as in inventory of the services (accommodation capacity, number of tourists, tourist objectives in the area, hotels, guesthouses, hostels, agro-tourist guesthouses, tourism agencies, details specific to public alimentation in the target areas, entertainment, transportation) that support the tourism sector.

According to the World Tourism Organisation, tourism includes the activities of individuals who travel and live outside their usual environment for one consecutive year at the most for recreational, business or other purposes.

The concept of “tourism” refers on the one hand to people’s travel and on the other hand to organising the service and special production.

Tourism is the production and exchange of services and goods from the business units that create an organisation or have a material and technical base, to ensure tourists’ stay (accommodation, food, transport, recreation, health, sports etc.), who temporarily live outside the personal home (minimum 24 hours) without needing to work.

Thus, the development of the tourism sector at the level of a certain territory depends on the quality, diversity of the existing specific services and/or tourist attractions, these two elements representing determining factors for qualifying a certain area as tourist destination. In terms of the tourist services, they differentiate as follows:

- ✓ **Basic tourist services** - they include the provision of accommodation services, meals, transportation services.
- ✓ **Additional tourism services** - they include the services related to travels, entertainment, events, tourism sports and animation services, spa and other medical services, congress and business events, rental of installations, equipment and vehicles, horse riding schools and clubs, ski schools, schools for aquatic sports, etc. Most of these services are related to facilitating tourists’ stay, increasing the comfort of the stay.

The degree of attractiveness of an area, in terms of the potential of tourism development, is however assessed primarily by the potential tourism service providers, in terms of the existing tourism objectives in the territory or adjacent to them. The tourism objectives at the level of a territory are subscribed to the existing heritage.

There are three types of heritage: cultural, natural and mixed. The goals of the cultural heritage can include historical buildings, archaeological sites, artistic works (paintings, sculptures, etc.), worship places, etc. The natural heritage includes the natural areas at the level of which rare geological processes manifest, which include rare natural or particularly beautiful phenomena or which influence habitats for rare or endangered animals or plants. The mixed heritage includes both elements of natural and cultural importance.

Generally, the territories that enjoy a rich natural and/or cultural heritage are a high potential of economic and social development in terms of tourism sector development. By attracting the service providers addressed to potential tourists (accommodation facilities, tourism agencies, entertainment and leisure services, etc.), the territory enjoys additional capital generated by the incomes of those tourists transiting the area and who can contribute to increasing the standard of living and improving the quality of life from a local level. Due to the historical importance and contribution to maintaining the environmental biodiversity, both the natural and cultural heritages are closely monitored at the level of public institutions, both nationally and internationally.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) is one of the main institutions existing at international level that contributes to preserving and promoting the world, cultural and natural heritage.

The world UNESCO heritage in Romania currently includes six cultural sites and two natural sites (but none of them is located in the counties of Dolj, Mehedinți, Olt) and seven elements classified in the category of immaterial cultural heritage (of which one is specific to Olt County - the Ritual of Călușul¹, and other four ones are related to the entire territory of Romania: doina, group of men singing

¹ <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00011&RL=00090>

Christmas carols, crafting of traditional wall mats and cultural practices related to March, 1st.

The world UNESCO heritage in Bulgaria currently includes seven cultural sites and three natural sites (but none of them is located in the counties of Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven) and seven elements classified in the category of immaterial cultural heritage (none of them specific to the territory targeted by the study, but the cultural practices specific to March 1st are related to the whole territory of Bulgaria)

Natura 2000 is an initiative launched at community level for the preservation of the natural heritage, respectively of the most important types of habitats and species of Europe. The Natura 2000 Network consists of sites of community importance (Natura 2000 sites) divided into two categories: special areas of preservation and special avifaunistic protection areas. Such areas are on the territory of all Romanian counties and Bulgarian districts.

II. Methodology of Research

In order to draft this study, a number of methods of research have been used, to ensure a full and integrated character of the information representing the status of the cultural heritage, natural heritage and the evolution of the tourism sector in the counties of Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți.

The methodology of research included the sociological investigation based on interview, investigation based on questionnaire, analysis of statistical data and office analysis.

Thus, the following analyses have been carried out:

- site research on site used to collect qualitative and quantitative data on the tourism sector in the area targeted by the study

- by applying questionnaires among the accommodation units in the cross-border area of Dolj, Olt, Mehendinti, Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven
- by carrying out interviews with the representatives of the local authorities, representatives of accommodation facilities, representatives of tourism agencies or representatives of tourism objectives (museums, monasteries, archaeological sites, etc.)
- **the office research used to collect relevant data to analyse the current stage of development of the tourism sector in the cross-border area targeted by the study, as well as to identify the main tourism objectives subscribed to the natural and cultural heritage located on the territory of Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți counties in Romania and Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven districts in Bulgaria**

In order to determine the main strengths, weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats in relation to the evolution of the sector of tourism and cultural and natural heritage at the level of the territory targeted by the study, a SWOT analysis was done. The latter has substantiated the conclusions and recommendations included in the study on the sustainable valorisation of the cultural and natural heritage.

III. Presentation of the Collected and Analysed Data for Each Topic of Interest

III.1. Presentation of the Natural Heritage in the Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți (RO) Counties

Regarding the natural heritage, according to the GD no. 2151/2004, the protected natural areas are classified in the following categories:

- a) scientific reservations
- b) national parks

- c) natural monuments
- d) Natural reserves
- e) natural parks
- f) Special avifaunistic protection areas

At the level of Dolj County, there are 18 natural protected areas of national interest, identified according to Law no. 5/2000, with a total area of 541 ha which 116 km of watercourses added to (the Bălășan, Desnățui and Terpezița Rivers). This list was completed in 2014 with another natural protected area (the Zăval natural reserve - area of 351.3 ha), according to the GD 2151/2004.

In Dolj County, there are also located four sites that are part of the Natura 2000 Network. Approximately 1,052 km² of the area of Dolj County are sites of community importance, respectively 14% of the county area (7,414 km²).

Regarding the special avifaunistic protection areas as integral part of the European ecological network Natura 2000 in Romania, they have been assigned through the GD 1284/2007. At the level of Dolj County, four such areas have been identified.

In Dolj County, a zoo operates, which is located in the municipality of Craiova, in the Nicolae Romanescu Park.

Thus, the administrative territorial units in Dolj counties with the highest concentration of the natural heritage are:

- Municipalities: Craiova, Calafat
- Cities: Segarcea, Dăbuleni
- Townships: Malu Mare, Plenița, Gighera, Cetate, Bucovăț, Drănic, Ciupercenii Noi, Bratovoești, Desa, Teslui, Radovan, Drănic, Vârvoru de Jos.

The main natural tourist objectives located in Dolj County are presented below:

➤ **Peony Glade in Plenița forest:** the natural reserve is located in the Plenița Township and has an area of 50 ha; it represents a

forested area (with species of Hungarian oak and Turkey oak) where the protected flora species vegetates, Romanian peony.

➤ **Valea Rea - Radovan:** is located in Dolj County, at about 30 Km of the Municipality of Craiova, on the border between Băileștilor Plain and the Strehaia Platform at an altitude of about 80 m. The area is located in the forest steppe of the Romanian Plain. This is a reserve of biological character, with an area of 20 ha, protected for the rich and unique flora of the area

➤ **The Dăbuleni Dunes ("La Cetate"):** they are located on the territory of Dăbuleni township and have an area of 8 ha; the largest sand dune is the Posodari or "La Cetate" Dune, which is a protected botanical area.

➤ **The Gighera halophilous meadow:** it is located in Gighera township, with an area of 4 ha; this area is located in an inclined region, where the water mass oscillates between 0.2 and 1 m, and the water has a high content of aerated salt, chlorides and sodium. The status of this area allows the protection of plant and animal species adapted to this type of habitat.

➤ **The Cetate Meadow (in the Danube Meadow):** it is located in Cetate township, with an area of 6 ha; the protected area (classified in continental geographical bioregion of the Danube Plain) it represents a natural area (lakes, rivers, swamps, bogs, deciduous forests, pastures, vineyards and orchards), where in the floodable Danube Meadow many lakes formed (Golenți Lake, Hunia Lake, Fântâna Banului Lake and Maglavit Lake) which provides conditions for food, nesting and living for several migratory species of birds, birds of passage or non-migratory birds (some protected by law)

➤ **The Gighera-Ștefănel pasture:** it is located in the Gogoșu township, with an area of 10 ha; to the North of this area, there are Hungarian and Turkey oak forests, as well as durmast oaks. In this area, there are also many other species of deciduous trees specific to the hills with low altitude and plains. From the vegetal landscape, on the western border with Mehedinți County, isolated oak clusters are

kept, and there are large oak forests nearby: The Tiu Forest, Drocaia Forest, Pirtea Forest, Boierească Forest.

➤ **The fossiliferous location of Bucovăț:** it is located in Bucovăț township, with an area of 4 ha; it is an important fossiliferous point, discovered in 1949, having rich fossil shells of molluscs dating since the Paleolithic period.

➤ **The fossiliferous location of Drănic:** it is located in Drănic township, with an area of 6 ha; the protected Paleontological area of Drănic is of special scientific importance, being the southernmost point with Romanian fauna in Oltenia, which includes a varied fauna of molluscs and micro-mammals.

➤ **Ciuperceni-Desa:** the natural region with an area of 200 hectares is in the Danube Meadow, in the South-Western extremity of Dolj County, South-East to Ciuperceni village. In the natural reserve area, there are many types of habitats, as follows: natural eutrophic water bodies, oligotrophic lakes, pannonic salt marshes, pannonic pastures on sands, alluvial pastures of low altitude, clusters of meadow tree vegetation (willow, white poplar and tremulous poplar), wet depressions, sand dunes and arable lands; environments sheltering and ensuring living and food conditions for several species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish.

➤ **The Adunații de Geormana Lake:** the region with an area of 102 ha is located in a plain area of the Jiu river basin, spreading on the territories of the Bratovoești and Teasc localities and is part of the category of wet regions. This protected area is characterised by the presence of the lacustrine ecosystems, respectively the Victora Lake and Marica Pond, adjacent to marshy areas.

➤ **The Preajba-Făcăi lacustrine complex:** the natural region with an area of 28 hectares on the central-eastern side of Dolj County, North to Preajba village. The natural area is a lacustrine complex (lakes, marshes, watercourses, alluvial forests, sand dunes, arable lands, pastures) in the North-West of Romanaților Plain, which houses a great variety of flora and fauna specific to wetlands.

➤ **Caraula Lake:** the natural region with an area of 28 ha is located in the Caraula Township; the Caraula lake was built in 1971, in order to use an irrigation system to expand the vegetable garden in the former Caraula Cape. After a while, this system has been replaced by a centralised system with Danube water, benefiting from the irrigation canal of Izvoare - Giubega, and the lake has remained a fish pond that was populated with various fish species and amphibians.

➤ **The Zăval atural reserve:** the region with an area of approximately 350 ha is located on the territory of Zăval township and includes the Zăval forest, which is a mixed forest with various deciduous species. There are also thermal water springs in Zăval forest.

At the level of Dolj County, there are six natural protected areas of national interest, identified according to Law no. 5/2000, with a total area of 653.7 ha. This list was completed in 2014 with other six natural protected areas (with a cumulated area of 5,206 ha), according to the Government Decision 2151/2004.

In Olt County, there are also located 16 sites that are part of the Natura 2000 Network. Approximately 274 km² of the area of Dolj County are sites of community importance, respectively 5% of the county area (5,498 km²).

At the level of Olt County, 3 avifaunistic protected areas have been identified, according to the GD 1284/2007.

In Olt mCounty, there was also a zoo (in the Municipality of Slatina), however not having the authorisations required for operation. In 2016, all animals in this zoo have been transferred to the authorised institutions.

Thus, the administrative territorial units in Olt counties with the highest concentration of the natural heritage are:

- Municipalities: Slatina
- Townships: Dobrosloveni, Strejești, Obârșia, Ștefan cel Mare

The main natural tourist objectives located in Olt County are presented below:

➤ **Braniștea Catârilor Forest:** is a forested area in the South-West of Romanațiului Plain, with an area of 301.3 ha, located on the territory of Obârșia and Ștefan cel Mare townships, with a protection role for arboreal species of grey oak and downy oak, South oak with heights ranging between 25 and 28 metres.

➤ **Călugărească Forest:** is a forested region with an area of 40 ha, located in Crăciunel village (Radomirești township), in the North-West of Boianului Plain (a subdivision of the Romanian Plain), with a role of protection for Dacian oak forests.

➤ **Forest House on Potelu Forest:** is a forested region in the Potelu Meadow (Danube Meadow), located in the Ianca township, with an area of 1.5 ha with a purpose of protection for a few specimens of secular oak vegetating in association with arboreal species of acacia and poplar.

➤ **The peony reserve of the Academy:** it is located in the Stoicânești Township with an area of 54.9 ha and represents a forested area with the purpose of protection for the Romanian peony species, which houses a great flora and fauna variety.

➤ **The reserve of Turkish oak arboretums:** it is located in the Poboru Township with an area of 121 ha and represents a forested area (on the border of passing from the Romanian Plain to the Getic Plateau) with the purpose of protection for arboreal species of Hungarian oak, with an average age of 75 years.

➤ **The Seaca Optășani Forest:** it is located in the Optășani village (Spineni Township), with an area of 135 ha and is an area covered with Hungarian oak arboretum in a proportion of 82%, in association with Turkish oak and durmast oak.

At the level of Mehedinți County, there are 2 natural reserves of the biosphere, national or natural parks, identified according to Law no. 5/2000, respectively:

- **The Domogled - Valea Cernei biosphere reserve:** The reserve is subscribed on the territory of the Domogled - Valea Cernei National Park Founded in 1990, having its own administration as of 2003, the Domogled-Valea Cernei National Park is located in the South-East of Romania and spreads over 3 counties, as follows: Caras-Severin, Mehedinti and Gorj The Domogled-Valea Cernei National Park is located in the East of Caraș-Severin County, covering an area of 23,185 ha and in the West of Mehedinți County covering the area of 8,220 ha and respectively in the West of Gorj County with an area of 29,806 ha. The reserve is characterised by a diversity of the types of landscapes (calcareous slopes with Black Pine of Banat, canyons with strongly oscillating flow streams, calcareous tops with sub-Mediterranean vegetation, widely spread beech forests of great ages, alpine clearings with juniper, mountain accumulation lakes, calcareous canyons and abysses, villages isolated in the mountain, sub-alpine pastures with limestone), unique thermal caves in Romania, thermal and mineral springs.
- **The reserve of the Iron Gates reserve:** The reserve is subscribed on the territory of the Iron Gates National Park. The Iron Gates Natural Park is on the left bank of Danube, in the South-West of Romania, between the Buziaș and Gura Văii localities, being located on the administrative territories of two counties: Caras-Severin and Mehedinti. As an area, the natural park covers more than 115,000 hectares. The whole area includes 18 scientific reserves protected by a very rich biodiversity. It also includes two areas of special avifaunistic protection, which belong to the Natura 2000 ecological network (the Almăjului-Locvei Mountains and the Danube-Baziaș-Iron Gates Watercourse).

At the level of the same normative act, 32 natural reserves are identified, located in Mehedinți County, with a total area of 2,105.50

ha. This list was completed in 2014 with other two natural protected areas (Isverna Cave, Mehedinți Plateau Geopark), with a total area of 106,002 ha, according to the GD 2151/2004.

In Mehedinți County, there are also located 11 sites that are part of the Natura 2000 Network. Approximately 1,362 km² of the area of Mehedinți County are sites of community importance, respectively 28% of the county area (4,933 km²).

At the level of Mehedinți County, five avifaunistic specially protected areas have also been identified, according to the GD 1284/2007.

In Mehedinți County, a public aquarium is also located, operating in the municipality of Drobeta Turnu Severin - the department of Natural Sciences in the Museum of the Iron Gates Region.

Thus, the administrative territorial units in Mehedinți County with the highest concentration of the natural heritage are:

- Municipalities: Drobeta Turnu Severin (locality of Gura Văii),
- Townships: Cireșu, Balta, Ponoarele, Isverna, Breznița-Ocol

The main natural tourist objectives located in Mehedinți County are presented below:

➤ **The Epuran Cave:** The natural area is on the North-West side of Mehedinți County and on the South-eastern one of Jupânești village. The natural area is a cavern (cave consisting of a network of galleries and halls) on the versant of Ponorăț stream, arranged on two levels, as follows: the first (active) level consisting of straight and descending galleries, wells, a lake (with the siphon diameter of about 10 m) and an upper level with several halls (North Hall, Bears Hall, Collapses Hall) and galleries (Strait of Hope, the Great Ramonaj, the Gallery of Mud Plates or the Gallery of Treasures). The cave is of special speological interest both due to the many formations and to the remains of fossil fauna signalled here.

➤ **The spring and rocks of Câmăna:** The natural area is on the western extremity of Mehedinți County, close to the territorial limit with the Caraș-Severin county (in the Mehedinți Plateau), on the North-western side of Podeni village, having an area of 25 ha. The

natural area is an area with a large variety of karstic phenomena (rocky slopes, sinkholes, limestone, hydro-karstic systems, valleys), of geological, floral, faunistic and landscape importance.

➤ **Gura Văii-Vârciorova:** the natural region with an area of 305 ha is on the South-western side of Mehedinți County (in the Getic Plateau, on the left bank of Danube in the Almăjului and Locvei Mountains), on the North-western territory of the Gura Văii village. The protected region is included in the Iron Gates National Park and is an area of protection role for many rare floral species, some on the red list of the IUCN.

➤ **Valea Oglănicului:** the natural region with an area of 150 ha is on the South-western side of Mehedinți County in the Oglănicului Valley Meadow (near Banului Island), on the South-eastern side (downstream) of Gura Văii village. The region is an area of study of the life of insects and protection of several rare floral species (wild gladiolus, peony, etc.).

➤ **Vânjului Meadow:** the natural region located on the territory of the Vânju Mare town, with an area of 14 ha, includes a forest of meadow consisting of oak, ash, Tatar maple. The existing fauna includes the lily of the valley flowers, among other things.

➤ **The Ponoarele lilac forest:** the natural region with an area of 20 ha is on North-eastern extremity of Mehedinți County, on the eastern side of Băluța village. The region located in a hilly area consisting of crystalline and calcareous schists attributed to the Jurassic period. The natural area overlaps to the Natura 2000 site - the Mehedinți Plateau and is a forested area (gentle hills, slopes, valleys, canyons, sinkholes, limestone), with a protective role for the wild lilac species.

➤ **The Isverna Mediterranean shrubs:** the natural area is on the central-northern extremity of Mehedinți County, close to the territorial limit with the Caraș-Severin county on the territory of Isverna village, having an area of 10 ha. The protected region is a mountain area covered with species of trees, shrubs and herbs, in the

area of which several rare flower species vegetate (dogwood, gentian, etc.)

➤ **Stan's peak:** Stan's Peak in Mehedinți Mountains is the highest peak in the Mehedinți Mountains, with an altitude of 1,466 m. The natural region is located in Isverna township and has an area of 120 ha.

➤ **Țesna Valley:** The natural region is on the central-northern extremity of Mehedinți County on the western side of Costești village. The protected region, located in the Balta township, with an area of 160 ha, is an area of canyons excavated in Jurassic limestone by the waters of Țesna River, rocky slopes, debris, caves, sinkholes, limestone and valleys.

➤ **Borovăț Forest:** The natural area is on the central-western side of Mehedinți County, on the South-western territory of Bâlvănești township, with an area of 30 ha. the protected region is a forested area in the basin of the Borovăț stream, with a role of protection for a tree species of pine tree, known as the black pine of Banat.

➤ **Bunget Forest:** The natural area is on the central-western side of Mehedinți County, on the North-eastern territory of Burila Mare township and the North-eastern one of Devesel village, with an area of 18.2 ha. The protected region is a forested area with a protection role for tree species of secular oak.

➤ **Drăghiceanu Forest:** The natural region is on the North-western side of Mehedinți County, on at an altitude of 1,000 m), on the northern territory of Obârșia-Cloșani village, with an area of 60 ha. The protected region is a forested area with a protection role for forest vegetation of trees and shrubs, with walnut species, manna, Turkish hazel or wild lilac.

➤ **Duhovnei Hill:** The natural region is in the Danube Gorge on the western side of Mehedinți County, on the territory of Ilovița township, with an area of 50 ha. The region is an area with a

protection role for several tree species of vegetation of secular durmast oak, which vegetates in association with the Turkish hazel.

➤ **Vărănic Hill:** the natural region with an area of 350 ha is in the Danube Gorge on the western side of Mehedinți County (on the territory of Breznița-Ocol township), with a maximum altitude of 403 m. The region is a natural area of sub-Mediterranean shrubs developed on calcareous sub-layers, which protect several species of flora (hornbeam, manna, wild lilac) and fauna (horned viper, Hermann's tortoise).

➤ **Great Kazans and Small Kazans:** The Kazans are a sector in the Danube Gorge when passing through the Carpathian Mountains, located on the territory of Dubova township. They are about 9 km long. In some places, the Danube narrows up to 230 m, making navigation difficult. The river is bordered by vertical, rocky walls. Maximum depths of about 75 m. In the sector of the Kazans, the water flowing speed exceeds 5 m/s. The natural region covers an area of 215 ha. The Great Kazans are about 4 km long, bordered between the Ciucarul Mare (in Romania) and Veliki Strbac (Serbia) massifs. The Small Kazans are about 3 km long, being located between the Ciucarul Mic (in Romania) and Mali Strbac (Serbia) massifs.

➤ **The fossiliferous location of Șvinița:** The natural area is on the western extremity of Mehedinți County, on the North-western territory of Svinița village, having an area of 95 ha. The region is a depression area in the Danube Gorge where there are significant deposits of fossiliferous fauna assigned to the geological period of Middle Jurassic which belongs to the Mesozoic Era.

➤ **The fossiliferous location of Brahna:** The natural area is on the central-western side of Mehedinți County, on the western territory of Bahna village, covering an area of 10 ha. The region is a depression area in the Bahna River basin where there are significant deposits of fossiliferous Sarmatian fauna in lithologic levels.

➤ **Stârmina Forest:** The natural area is on the central-western side of Mehedinți County (in the Danube Meadow), on the on the North-western vicinity of Rogova township, respectively on the territory of Hinova township, covering an area of 100.3 ha. The protected region is a forested area with a protection role for a thorn species that vegetates in compact communities in the tree-lines of the deciduous forests.

➤ **The karstic complex of Ponoarele:** the area is on the North-eastern extremity of Mehedinți County (in the Mehedinți Plateau), close to the territorial limit with the Gorj county on the territory of Ponoarele township. The karstic complex of Ponoarele is a hilly area with gentle heights (consisting of crystalline and calcareous schists assigned to the Jurassic period), rare geological formations (karstic phenomena) (the Bridge of God, natural bridge), sinkholes, limestone (the Field of Limestone), valleys, canyons, lakes (Zătonul Mare Lake, Zătonul Mic Lake), caves (Ponoarele Cave); with forests (Lapiezuri Forest) and pastures hosting a great variety of fauna and flora specific to the Mehedinți Plateau.

➤ **The calcareous walls from Coșuștei Springs:** The natural area is on the central-northern side of Mehedinți County, on the South-western side of Giurgiani village, on the territory of Balta township, covering an area of 60 ha. The protected area is a natural area in the Mehedinți Mountains, between the Ciolanu and Pietrele Albe massifs, in the area of which the Coșuștei springs have their origins.

➤ **Coșuștei Canyons:** the natural area is on the central-northern extremity of Mehedinți County, close to the territorial limit with the Caraș-Severin county on the territory of Balta township, covering an area of 50 ha. The region is an area of canyons excavated in Jurassic limestone by the waters of the Coșușteia river (a right side affluent of Motru river), rocky slopes, debris, caves, sinkholes, limestone and valleys, with a flora and fauna specific to the Mehedinți Plateau.

➤ **Cornetul Babelor and Cerboanei:** these natural areas are on the central-northern extremity of Mehedinți County, close to the

territorial limit with the Caraș-Severin county on the territory of Balta township, covering an area of 40 ha. The territories subscribed to these areas are an area protecting the sub-Mediterranean type ecosystems, with a flora and fauna specific to the Mehedinți Plateau

➤ **The Topolniței Canyons and Topolniței Cave:** the natural area is on the North-West side of Mehedinți County and on the Southern one of Cireșu village, having an area of 60 ha. The region is an area (of geologic, floral, fauna and landscape interest) with a varied landscape (canyons, valleys, caves, sinkholes) covered with forests and pastures, with flora (beech, oak, durmast oak, Turkish oak, manna, hornbeam, smoke bush, wild lilac, checkered lily) and fauna specific to the Mehedinți Plateau.

➤ **The fossiliferous location of Malovăț:** The natural area is located in the 23 August village, Malovăț township, Mehedinți County, 14 kilometres away from the Drobeta Turnu Severin city, with an area of 6 ha. the sector where the fossils are numerous and where the fauna composition could be researched (mainly various species of mullusks) is Malovăț - Valea Boerească - Colibași - Cocorova.

➤ **Cracul Găioara:** The natural area is on the South-eastern extremity of the Iron Gates National Park, on the western territory of Dudașu Schelei village, having an area of 5 ha. The region is a natural area with a protection role for several rare flower species among which: somlatha, rustyback, dianthus, cream scabious, dandelion or centaurea, some on the red list of the IUCN.

➤ **The Mediterranean shrubs of Cornetul Obârșia-Cloșani:** the natural area is on the central-northern extremity of Mehedinți County, close to the territorial limit with the Caraș-Severin and Gorj counties on the territory of Obârșia-Cloșani township, having an area of 60 ha. The protected region is a mountain area covered with species of trees, shrubs, with specimens of hornbeam, manna, wayfaring tree, smoke bush, or wild lilac. In terms of herbs, there vegetate several rare flower species, among which: rustyback, dogwood, gentian or lady's bedstraw.

➤ **Cracul Crucii:** The natural region with an area of 2 ha is on the South-western side of Mehedinți County, on the western territory of Gura Văii village. The natural region is an area with a protection role for several rare flower species among which: cheilanthes marantae, rustyback, dianthus, pragnos carinata or dense flowered mullein, some on the red list of the IUCN.

➤ **Fața Virului:** The natural region with an area of 6 ha is on the South-western side of Mehedinți County, on the North-western territory of Gura Văii village. The natural region is an area (steep slopes, thresholds and valleys, canyons, waterfalls) covered with oak and durmast oak in a mixture of walnut species, European nettle tree, aka mahaleb cherry or hazelnut tree. The natural region also protects several rare flower species.

➤ **The Ponicoval Cave:** The Ponicoval Cave is dug into the left side of Danube, in the Great Kazans (Ciucaru Mare), partially flooded after making the reservoir. Its galleries total 1,660 m, crossing Ciucaru Mare and exiting directly into the Danube River. The Ponicoval Cave is declared a speological reserve due to some fossil remains, a very old fragment of ceramics and some endemic species. Visiting is recommended to be done between May and October, except for the periods of high floods, when it is possible for the Ponicoval Gallery to flood totally or partially².

➤ **The Veterani Cave:** The Veterani Cave is located in the Ciucarul Mare massif, on the left bank of the Danube River. It has a total length of 173 m and a width of 40 m. It is a cave that was always of interest to the treasure seekers worldwide, who state that the famous silver treasury of Maria Theresa belonging to the Austro-Hungarian Empire or the treasures of the Serbian tsar Obrenovici would be hidden in a cavern closed by rocks. The cave consists of a short access gallery and a large hall, lighted by a natural window in limestone. In the cave, on the West side there is also a gallery where a well is arranged, called the “Fountain of the Turks”, the water of

² <https://promehedinti.ro/pestera-ponicova/>

which comes directly from the groundwater, not from the infiltrations of the Danube River.

III.2. Presentation of the Natural Heritage of Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven (BG)

The main natural tourist objectives located on the territory of the **Vidin district** are as follows:

➤ **The “Anishte” place.** It is in the vicinity of the Belogradchik - Salash road, 2 km East of the Granichak village. On this territory, the remains of an ancient Roman settlement were discovered. The visit of the objective can be combined with a walk on the pastures and rocks near Belogradchik, a tour of the Salash village and possibly a visit to the *“Kada Boaz” celebration*, which takes place nearby each year shortly before or after the feast of St. Procopii, which is on *July 21st*.

➤ **Borov kamak Borovishki sanctuary complex.** The area is in a complex of rocks, which is located near Belogradchik, in Stara Planina. Two votive crosses can be visited in the area, as well as the Borov Kamaka rock, signs of Magura, an altar in a recess in the rock, a round stone bed, the wall of a citadel, niches for beams in rocks, a carved complex displaying images of the priests, a monastery built on the old worshiping place, three forts, the foundations of an inn, a small priestly shelter and two caves. The tour takes about 6 hours. The access difficulty is slightly above the average. The length of the route is approximately 6 km.

➤ **The “Venetsa” cave.** It is located in Kraishte, about 3 km from Oreshets Station and 14 km from Belogradchik. The entrance to the cave takes place every hour from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM (except for 12:00). This is valid from Tuesday to Friday. On Saturdays and Sundays, visits are allowed in groups. The cave is closed to visitors on Mondays. It takes about an hour and a half to visit the objective. No special equipment is required. Various secondary calcium formations can be seen in the cave. Along the floor there are

different colour crystals spread, due to the crystallisation of the water and minerals in the rocks around.

➤ **The “Lepenitsa” cave.** It is located 4 km East of Belogradchik in Markashnitsa. It is accessible by following the directions of an eco-tourist route marked in orange, which takes one hour and a half. This is the only cave with red sand, which builds the Belogradchik rocks. The cave is small - with a depth of about 40 m but it is arranged on two levels. Above the cave, there is a Thracian sanctuary with a throne, as well as a star map carved on a horizontal rock. Near the entrance to the Lepenitsa cave, the Belogradchik Archaeological Society ordered the construction of a hut made of natural materials, according to the model of the prehistoric dwellings.

➤ **The “Magura” Cave.** It is located on the southern slope of the karst Ribashka Mogila hill, 17 km northwest of Belogradchik. Inside the cave, there is the largest exhibit of cave paintings in Europe (over 700 paintings representing women dancing, men hunting, tools used by the cave people for various activities, animals, plants, etc.) and the largest stalagmite in Bulgaria - “Padnaliia bor”, which is 11 metres long. Also, inside the cave, in the former bat chamber of bat, the only sparkling wine in Bulgaria is manufactured, which matures for 3 years under natural conditions. In another hall of the cave, one can visit exhibits such as bones of the animals that lived in the cave and household items of the tribes who lived in this part of the Balkans.

➤ **Belogradchishkite skali (The Rocks of Belogradchik).** They represent a unique natural phenomenon, being a complex of rocks with an approximate length of 30 km and a width of 6-7 km. The complex spreads from West to East from the Vedernik mountain (1124 m) around Belogradchik to the villages of Borovitsa and Belotintsi. The rocks of Belogradchik were carved out by natural phenomena over 200 million of years. Their reddish colour is due to the content of iron oxide. They vary in shape and size, reaching heights above 100 metres. The rocks were used as natural defence by the Byzantines, Bulgarians and Ottomans in different eras. In the past, hundreds of steps were carved out, some of which are preserved even today. In many places, remains of buildings, walls,

pieces of bricks, fragments of ceramics can be seen. In the area of the Belogradchik Rocks, pollution and rock climbing are prohibited.

The main natural tourist objectives located on the territory of the **Montana district** are as follows:

➤ **The healing spring near the Balyuvitsa village.** 13 km from Berkovitsa, there is the small village of Balyuvitsa, where a water with medicinal properties springs from. This water is used especially for the treatment of ophthalmic diseases, being rich in magnesium. In addition to treating eye diseases, the water in this spring is also beneficial for treating disorders of the nervous system, gastrointestinal and dermatological problems. The spring has been officially certified for its curative qualities. In addition, gold veins have been discovered inside the rocks around the spring.

➤ **The marble cave - Berkovitsa.** The natural phenomenon is located in the spot of "Alchov Bair", near the Berkovitsa town. In 1971, the site was declared as a natural landmark. A forest park is located on its territory, the whole area having a particularly beautiful landscape. The marble cave is not one of the most popular destinations, as it is an objective protected for the implementation of conservation measures. It is renowned for the marble formations, galleries and fauna existing in their cave.

➤ **The "Sopovo" place near the Stoyanovo village.** The Stoyanovo village is known for its iron bridge, built in the 19th century. In the 19th century, the bridge was named the Miracle in North-western Bulgaria. There are many stories and legends about this area, and the strange phenomena happening on this territory. The "Sopovo" place is not yet a very popular place, perhaps the reasons for this are in its difficult accessibility.

➤ **The Zanojene and Rayski kat waterfalls.** Above the Zanojene neighbourhood in Vârșeț city, there is the beautiful "Vodopada" area (Waterfall). The *Zanojene Waterfall* is located on the Orloștitsa river, about 5 km southwest of the centre of Vârșeț city. Above the waterfall, there is a vast meadow with view to the peaks of Stara Planina Mount and especially to the Todorini Kuli peak. The waterfall can be reached by car or on foot. The *Rayski Kat*

Waterfall is the most famous one of the two waterfalls near the Vârșeț city. It's on the Bashtitsa river. The waterfall is accessible by following a 20 minute pedestrian route. In the summer and autumn, especially in the dry years, the waterfall is dried up.

➤ **The “Kotlya” rock massif.** The North-West side of the Stresherski hill in the Vratsa Balkan is known as Kotlya and is located 32 km from the Vratsa town, 31 km from the Montana city, 13 km from the Varshets city. In the village area there are more than 50 caves. According to local legends, the famous voivode Valchan got lost in these places, burying his treasure in one of these caves under the Streshero peak, where there are remains of a medieval monastery and a Roman aqueduct.

The main natural tourist objectives located on the territory of the **Vratsa district** are as follows:

➤ **The “Skaklya” waterfall.** The waterfall is the highest, not flowing constantly in Bulgaria - 141 m. It is located 1.5 km south of Vratsa, behind the Kaleto hill. The waterfall is accessible by car or on foot to the area above the hospital in Vratsa city. Subsequently, visitors need to follow a medium-intensity route that averagely takes 7-8 hours.

➤ **The “Borov kamak” waterfall.** The walk to the waterfall takes about two hours, but the route is tiring because of the steeper areas. The route begins from the Zgorigrad village and reaches the Parshevitsa guesthouse. The route follows the Leva River on the slopes of the Balkan Vratsa.

➤ **The “Shopkata” waterfall.** The Shopkata Waterfall is not a well-known waterfall. It is located in the Vratsa Balkans, near the Pavolche village. The height of the waterfall is 77 m. The access to the waterfall is on foot and starts from the Pavolche village. It takes approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes to go from the Pavolche village to the waterfall.

➤ **The “Ritlite” natural phenomenon.** It is located in the Iskar Gorges, North of the Lyutibrod village. It includes

rocky formations of limestone along the banks of the Iskar River, both narrow and tall ones. The most impressive ones are four parallel vertical walls on the left bank of the river, while those on the right are significantly smaller and less distinct. The rocks reach 80 metres in height, their thickness varies from 3 to 7 metres and their length ranges between 200 and 400 metres. The “Ritlite” rock formations are declared a natural landmark. Nearby, there is the Cherepish Monastery.

➤ **Bojiyat most (the Bridge of God).** The Bojiyat most rock phenomenon is located between the villages of Lilyache and Chiren, about 15 km North of Vratsa. The Bojiyat most rock phenomenon is a cave crossed by a river. The two open galleries can be visited within the cave. In the dry months of the year, the river crossing the cave is dried out.

➤ **The “Leddenika” Cave.** It is located 16 km from the town of Vratsa, in the natural park of “Vrachanski Balkan”. In 2005, its infrastructure was completely modernised. It hosts 53 species of animals, including the Svetlomrazets insect, which, due to the adaptability it has developed for darkness, it cannot go out in the light. The “Leddenika” cave is famous for its blue and white waterfalls. The tour of the cave takes about an hour, and the route covers 350 m of cave galleries.

The main natural tourist objectives located on the territory of the **Pleven district** are as follows:

➤ **Park “Kaylăka”.** It is located South of the centre of Pleven city, being declared a protected site. Its surface is of about 10 ha located in the karstic valley of the Tuchenitsa River. The natural canyon of the river has sheltered a rich and varied flora and fauna, where unique plants for Bulgaria and the Balkan Peninsula are encountered, many birds and mammals being included in the Bulgarian Red Book. The area was the habitat of several prehistoric animals and creatures millions of years ago, and in

most limestone rock masses there are still fossils of ancient aquatic organisms. The park offers unique combined opportunities for walking, recreation and entertainment. The vertical rocks, of more than 40-50 metres tall, are excellent for climbing. In the area there are also artificial lakes and dams, boats and water bikes, swimming pools, hotels, bars, cafes, restaurants, discos, playgrounds, tennis courts, zoo and a unique restaurant built in a cave. The park also hosts the Pleven Summer Theatre, as well as the only one of its kind in Bulgaria, the Wine Museum. At the beginning of the park there are the ruins of the ancient Storgozia citadel. There are 3 small dams, as well as artificial ponds.

➤ **The “Persina” natural park.** The “Persina” natural park is one of the eleven natural parks in Bulgaria and the only one located along the Bulgarian Danube River. Founded in 2000, the “Persina” Natural Park is located on the territory of three Danube municipalities - Nikopol, Belene and Svishtov. The greatest wealth of the Park is the avifauna, considering that more than 200 species of birds have their habitat here. One of the symbols of the park is the sea eagle - one of the rare and protected birds in Bulgaria. On the territory of the “Persina” Natural Park, historical ruins have been discovered, such as: *the ancient wall “Dimum”* near Belene town, dating from the first millennium BC, the *medieval church in Roci* since the 10th - 11th Century AD near the town of Nikopol, *the Shishman royal citadel and “St. Peter and St. Paul” church* from the times of the second Bulgarian Kingdom.

➤ **The canyon of Chernelka River.** The ecologic route for visiting the objective starts from the Gortalovo village, located 16 km South of Pleven, and the last point is the Kartojabene village, located 10 km South-West of Pleven. The canyon is 60 to 200 metres wide and has an area of 300 hectares. Today, the karstic rocks rise like a crown to a height of 10 to 35-40 metres. The route is about 7 km long and takes 1 hour and 20 minutes. The canyon abounds with rare species of plants, birds and animals. A great part of these is in

the Red Book of Bulgaria. The specific vegetation includes the largest population of snowdrops in the region. Along the route, drawings can be seen in the rocks, historical vestiges of Roman roads, etc.

➤ **The “Kupenite” rock formations.** The “Cupenite” rock formations - Reseleshki Kukli (chukli) (the dolls from Reselets) are about 1.5 km North-West of the Reselets village centre on the road to the Brese village. About 200 metres downstream of the river there is also the beautiful and Skoka waterfall. The formation includes more than 20 rock towers and rises more than 40 metres above the riverbed. The rocks are light gray, and their thickness ranges from 30 to 150 m. The Skoka Waterfall and the Kaletu forest park in the Ruchene River Valley complement the special natural landscape.

➤ **The Ganinata Cave, Sadovets Village.** This is the largest and most visited cave in the area of Studenets locality. According to local legends, it was used as shelter by the hajduks and more recently by partisans. The cave has two levels. The height of the opening is 20 m, the width is 6-12 m. In the middle there is a pillar, which supports the vault and separates the second level from the first. The first floor is small, short and narrow, filled with alluviums. Unlike the first, the second level is wider and divided into two galleries, separated by the pillar. There are no special formations, there are small stalactites, stalagmites, ponies and others. Remains of boar teeth and human skeletons have been found here, concluding that the cave has been inhabited by the primitive man.

III.3. Presentation of the Cultural Heritage in Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți Counties (RO)

In Romania, according to Law no. 5/2000, the cultural heritage is differentiated into the following categories:

1. Monuments and architectural ensembles

- a) Citadels
- b) Princely ruined court ensembles
- c) Fortified churches - fortresses
- d) Castles, conches, palaces
- e) Cule
- f) Urban civil buildings
- g) Urban ensembles
- h) Wooden churches
- i) Outdoor ethnographic museums
- j) Cave churches
- k) Monastic churches and ensembles
- l) Industrial architecture; arrangements of communication means
- m) Folk architecture monuments (village dwellings)
- n) Traditional rural ensembles

2. Archaeological monuments and sites

- a) Paleolithic complexes
- b) Neolithic and eneolithic settlements
- c) Settlements and necropolises of the Bronze Age
- d) Fortifications and settlements of the first era of the Iron Age (hallstattiene)
- e) Dacian fortifications
- f) Necropolises and sacred areas - the Iron Age
- g) Castles and the related civil settlements Roman-Byzantine fortifications
- h) Ancient cities
- i) Buildings
- j) Medieval monuments identified based on the archaeological researches
- k) Archaeological reserves including sites with long-term living levels - settlements and necropolises

Historical monuments are subscribed to the cultural heritage, which are grouped into four categories according to their kind:

- Archaeological monuments
- Architectural monuments
- Monuments for the public forum
- Memorial and funeral monuments

The list of historical monuments is managed by the Ministry of Culture and National Identity, being made for the first time in 2010 and subsequently updated in 2015. This list is approved by order of the Minister and published in the Official Journal (Order of the Minister of Culture, No. 2828/2015).

The historical monuments are also classified in terms of value into two groups:

- Group A: historical monuments of national or universal value
- Group B: historical monuments representative for the local cultural heritage

According to the Order of the Minister (OM) no. 2828/2015, there are 700 historical monuments in **Dolj County**, of which 66 of national or universal value and 634 classified into the local cultural heritage.

On the territory of Dolj County there are no monuments registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The most important cultural tourist objectives in Dolj county are as follows:

- The "**Alexandru and Aristia Aman**" **County Library** (location: 9 Mihail Kogalniceanu Street, municipality of Craiova): **Alexandru Aman** (1820-1885), magistrate, the older brother of the famous painter Theodor Aman and his wife, **Aristia Aman** (1833-1904) leave their entire wealth - houses, furniture, paintings, books and works of art - to the Craiova City Hall through a will, in order to establish a public cultural settlement: the "**Alexandru and Aristia Aman**" **Foundation**, consisting of a library, a museum and a gallery of paintings. Until 1950 the library was patronised by the local city hall. As of November 1st, 1950, it became a regional library until 1968, then a municipal one, and since 1974 - a county library. The

books from the foundation's inventory are found in the basic collections of the public library of Craiova, an institution that took back the names of its founders in 1991. The other assets of the foundation: furniture, paintings, engravings, coins, etc. are found in the inventories of the Art Museum and the Museum of Oltenia in Craiova.³

- **The Vălimărescu House** (location: Calea Unirii 4, Craiova): The building is surrounded by other historical monuments significant for Craiova, including the Stoilov-Bolintineanu House, the National Bank of Romania - the branch of Dolj and the All Saints' / St. Anthony Catholic Church. The building dates from the end of the 19th Century (1892-1893) and was built by the entrepreneurs Costa and Nedelcu according to the plans of the French architect Albert Galleron, who also designed the Romanian Athenaeum in Romania and the Palace of the National Bank of Romania in Bucharest, the Dimitrie Ghika Palace in Comanesti and many other boyar houses in Bucharest and the province. Between 2004-2005, the building benefited from preservation, renovation and restoration works based on the original plans and photographs of ornaments. Following this process, the ornaments have been redone or reinforced, the interior walls have been decorated with silk panels, the wooden door frames have been cleaned and integrated to the interior overall colours and the stained glass windows have been restored⁴

- **The Barbu-Poenaru Cula** (location: Almăj Township): The Poenaru Cula of Almăj township, Dolj county, was built in 1764 by the boyar Barbu Poenaru. In 1801 and 1844, the cula burns down, thus losing the floor which was not restored. In 1904, the cula was donated to the town hall by the descendants of the Poenaru family of boyars, in order to transform it into school. Subsequently, several classrooms are added to the original building, the core of the original cula being thus incorporated into the school existing today. Near the

³ <http://aman.ro/istoric/>

⁴ <http://www.monumenteoltenia.ro/casa-constantin-valimarescu/>

school there is the church "Saint Voivodes", built between 1787 and 1789 also by Barbu Poenaru.⁵

- **The Cernăteștilor Cula** (location: Cernătești village): The building dates since the second half of the 18th Century, being built by the Cernătești boyars, with the typical function of defence. Between 1967 and 1969, in a ruined stage, the cula is transferred to the state property, renovated and included in the museum (village) circuit through the care of the school teacher Nicolae Pârvulescu. A museum has been set up inside the Cernăteștilor Cula, where hundreds of years old items have been brought. The Cernătești Cula is in a good state of preservation, and in 2017 new monument restoration works have been started through a project funded by the Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020.

- **The Art Museum of Craiova** (Location: Calea Unirii 15, Craiova): Founded in 1908 under the name of Alexandru and Aristia Aman Pinacotheca, it is to become the Art Museum of Craiova in 1954. The museum operates in the Constantin Mihail Palace, an architectural monument built in 1900-1907 in a neo-gothic style, according to the plans of the French architect Paul Gottereau, inaugurated in 1909. The palace was donated to the state in 1936. The museum presents to the public collections of universal (Dutch, Flemish, French, Italian school) and Romanian painting (16th - 20th centuries, works by Constantin Lecca, Theodor Aman, Ștefan Luchian, Nicolae Tonitza), seven sculptures by Constantin Brâncuși, the collections of Romanian icons and graphics. The items are exhibited in the Universal Art Gallery, the Romanian Art Gallery and the Constantin Brâncuși Cabinet.⁶

- **The Art and Ethnography Museum in Calafat** (location: str. 22 Decembrie 6, the municipality of Calafat): The Marincu Palace was built according to the plans of the French architect Paul Gottereau, renowned at the beginning of the 20th century in Romania, where he

⁵ <http://www.informatii-romania.ro/listing/cula-poenaru/>

⁶ https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muzeul_de_Art%C4%83_din_Craiova

also designed the Royal Palace in Bucharest, the University Central Library, the CEC House on Calea Victoriei and the Jean Mihail Palace, now the Art Museum in Craiova. Since 1967, the Museum of Art and Ethnography has been operating in this building, the heritage of which initially included donations and later on also acquisitions of art values. It is mainly an art museum with a rich heritage, but also presents a beginning of the folk art and ethnography department, having more than 1000 exhibits not fully exploited till today. Of the contemporary Romanian art works (paintings, graphics, sculpture) exhibited in the museum, canvas by Nicolae Grigorescu, Henri Catargi or Theodor Pallady and sculptures by Ion Irimescu, Nicu Enea, George Demetrescu Mirea outstand. The Art Museum of Calafat also hosts a room dedicated to the plastic artists from Vidin (Bulgaria), called the Bulgarian Cultural Centre⁷.

- **The Museum of Oltenia** - the Department of **Natural Sciences** (Location: str. Popa Șapcă 8, Craiova): It was established in 1928 as the Museum of Natural Sciences and later on it was joined with the Regional Museum of Oltenia. The building is an architectural monument dating back to 1926 and houses a paleontological collection (quaternary mammals), a malacological collection, entomological collection, oological collection, ornithological and mammalian collection, herbarium, as well as collections of mineralogy.⁸

- **The Museum of Oltenia** - the **History-Archaeology Department** (Location: str. Madona Dudu 14, Craiova): The current headquarters of the Archaeology and History Department was built between 1905 and 1907, with the destination of local school, according to the plans of the French Arch. Billek, preserving the Romanian architectural style. Over the decades, the heritage of the department has grown, the museum imposing itself through its collections: the Neolithic of Cârcea, the clay figurines of Gârla Mare,

⁷ <http://www.monumenteoltenia.ro/palatul-marincu/>

⁸ <http://ghidulmuzeelor.cimec.ro/id.asp?k=292>

the bronze ornaments from Basarabi, the Dacian treasury from Craiova, the oil lamps, numismatics treasures, the objects of religious art, fresco fragments from the church of St. Ioan Sebastian, white weapons and firearms, furniture, watches, photographs, postcards, flags, lapidaris, periodicals. They form those over 20 collections created, totalling more than 100,000 cultural assets, which contribute to the reconstruction of the main moments of the evolution of society from ancient times to present.⁹

- **The "Marin Sorescu" National Theatre** (location: str Alexandru Ioan Cuza 11, Craiova): The Marin Sorescu National Theatre of Craiova, formerly known as the National Theatre of Craiova, is a public theatrical institution of culture funded by the Ministry of Culture and National Identity. Founded in 1850, the theatre was named after the culture man and the universal writer Marin Sorescu in the years after the Revolution of 1989. The current building of the Craiova Theatre, a real architectural symbol of the city, a creation of the architect Alexandru Iotzu, was inaugurated on April 21st, 1973.

- **The Cioroiu Nou archaeological site** (location: Cioroiu Nou village): According to archaeologists, the site of Cioroiu Nou was once Malva, the capital of Dacia Malvensis, which was unsuccessfully sought for years in a row. A convincing argument in this regard is the discovery in this place of an inscription containing the name Dacia Malvensis, being the only such inscription in the country. During the excavations the remains of a military fortress, of a church, cemetery, baths and officers' dwellings with floor heating, statues, coins and pieces of metal, parts of weapons, as well as inscriptions and pottery items were found here.

- **The Nicolae Romanescu Park** (location: Bulevardul Nicolae Romanescu 1A, Craiova): At the initiative of Nicolae P. Romanescu, the mayor of Craiova at that time, the park was designed by the French architect Édouard Redont. In 1900, the plans of the park were

⁹ <http://ghidulmuzeelor.cimec.ro/id.asp?k=756>

awarded a gold medal at the Universal Exhibition in Paris (1900). The construction began in 1901 and was completed in 1903. The total area of the park is 96 hectares and includes, in addition to the ornamental plantations of trees and shrubs, a water body spreading on over 4 ha, a 20 ha hippodrome, roads, alleys and paths that add up to a length of 35 km. And it is considered to be the largest natural park in Eastern Europe. The park also has an amphitheatre for shows, a small zoo, which is one of the oldest in the country, inaugurated in 1906 and several restaurants.

- **The Historical Centre of Craiova:** The historical centre of Craiova was rehabilitated through a project financed through the Regional Operational Programme 2007-2013. The restored historical centre was inaugurated in 2015. Thus, the access to the historical centre began being only for pedestrians, plates with the old and new street names were installed, lanterns were mounted, and green areas have been arranged with various floral arrangements. The following works were also carried out: the restoration of the pavement on Nicolaescu-Plopșor Street, the demolition of the wrought iron fence surrounding the "St. Elijah" Church from the intersection of Lipscani street with Nicolaescu-Plopșor streets, the transformation of the land that surrounds the church in the public square. The plastic artist Lucian Irimescu painted the blind walls of the old Centre of Craiova in Buzești Square, which are lit at night by the pavement reflectors.

- **The Assembly of the Archbishop's Siege of Craiova and the Metropolis of Oltenia :** The heritage objective includes:

- o The Vorvoreanu House - the former Metropolitan Palace built in 1905: The building was built in the early 20th century and belonged to the Vorvoreanu family who was famous in Craiova. It is a special artistic achievement, outstanding by the ornamentation of the façade, as well as by the beauty of the interior ceilings painted by Francis Tribalski. The architect of the building was Dimitrie Maimarolu. The building had an interesting history. Built by Gogu Vorvoreanu, one of

the wealthiest citizens of Craiova at the time, the building was the siege of the German Commandment during the occupation of 1916-1918. The building became the siege of the Metropolis of Oltenia in the mid 20th century, when the Metropolis gave to the Museum Oltenia the House of the Bans in exchange for the Vorvoreanu Palace.

○ The wooden church All Saints Hagi Enuș - built in 1780: Among the founders of the church were also Nicolae Ceausescu, patron Dumitrache Sandulache biv vel clucer, Ion Băcanu, Mihai Cojocar, Ion Săpunaru and other foreign merchants. Over the years, the church has had different names, the patron saint of the church being All Saints as it was called in 1782.

Thus, the territorial administrative units with the highest concentration of the heritage built with cultural value of national interest were identified, which were:

- Municipalities: Craiova, Calafat
- Townships: Almăj, Brabova, Calopăr, Cernătești, Coțofenii din Dos, Podari, Șimnicu de Sus, Sopot, Țugul

Cultural and artistic manifestations with national and even international participation organised at the level of Dolj county are:

- ✚ The "Maria Tanase" national contest of the Romanian folk song performers - October, biannual organisation, in Craiova
- ✚ The "Shakespeare" Theatre Festival - April - May, in Craiova
- ✚ The "Ioana Radu" National Festival - October, in Craiova
- ✚ The Festival of Carols and Sacred Music - December, in Craiova
- ✚ The Days of Craiova - June, in Craiova
- ✚ The "Craiova Muzicală" (Musical Craiova) International Festival - November, in Craiova
- ✚ The "Elena Teodorini" Festival - October - November, in Craiova
- ✚ The suite of ancestral customs - December, in Craiova

The most famous traditional customs and celebrations specific to the region of Dolj county are listed below:

- + The ritual guarding of fountains, Iordănițul - January 6 - 7, in the villages of the southern Dolj County
- + The Trifon Celebration - the spiritual patron of vineyards - February 1st, in Segarcea town
- + Call over the village - at the Cheese Fare Sunday of the Great Lent in Cernătești Township
- + Proor - green branch - April 23rd, in villages and townships in Dolj County
- + The Joimari fires - on the Holy Thursday of the Holy Week, in the village of Salcia
- + The suite of the Oltenesc Căluș - Pentecost, in Craiova
- + The Community Sarindar - March, April, September, October, in Desa Township
- + The Folk Artisans' nFair - October 21-23, in Craiova
- + The Peony Festival - May, in Plenița township
- + "Cumicitul fetelor" - Easter, in Urzicuța township
- + Feast of the Ascension - June 9th, in the town of Filiași, Fratoștița village
- + Linden Festival - June 26th, in the Carpen, Cleanov Townships
- + Acacia flower - the third Sunday of May in Celaru township

According to the OM no. 2828/2015, there are 758 historical monuments in **Dolj County**, of which 59 of national or universal value and 699 classified into the local cultural heritage.

Olt County is included in the list of UNESCO intangible heritage through the ritual of Călușul (Romanian custom practiced before the Pentecost celebration). On the territory of Olt County there are no monuments registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The most important cultural touristic objectives existing on the territory of Olt County are presented below¹⁰:

- **Arheoparc - “The Boian Plain Museum”** (location: Str. N. Titulescu, nr. 239, Drăgănești-Olt): It is an open-air park, located in Drăgănești-Olt, which recreated a village according to the type of Neolithic settlements specific to the Gumelnița culture, the traces of which were discovered in Drăgănești-Olt. The Neolithic village consists of six open-air huts built on a land surrounded by a defence ditch and a wattle fence. The entrance to the museum is possible on a wooden deck, and the huts are of natural size. One of the huts is representative for a fisherman's dwelling, another one for the farmer, another for the potter, etc. Inside, they have Neolithic items or reconstructions of some Neolithic items, tables, worshiping altars, tools for the household and practicing of various occupations, a lacustrine house has also been reconstructed, used in ancient times for storing the supplies, because the settlements were built in frequently flooded valleys. The opening of the archaeopark took place on September 18th 2010.

- **The settlement of Sucidava**, the Dacian-Roman Age 2nd - 3rd Centuries (location: Celeiu village): Sucidava is the old capital of the Dacian tribe of the Suci. On the upper terrace of the Danube river, the defensive walls with eight completely unveiled towers of the late Roman town of Sucidava (4th - 6th centuries) can still be seen, which together with the current district cover a part of the Roman town of the 2nd - 3rd centuries, less known. The Roman Baths (thermae), a Paleo-Christian Basilica (5th -6th centuries) and paved streets have also been identified. The citadel outstands by the "secret fountain", an engineering masterpiece designed to supply water in the area during sieges. Also here, there is the foot of a Roman bridge built over the Danube during the time of Constantine the Great. Inaugurated in 328, it was more than 2,400 metres long, being considered one of the longest bridges of Antiquity.

- **The "Nicolae Titulescu" Memorial House** (Location: Nicolae Titulescu township): The "Nicolae Titulescu" Memorial House is a county museum in Nicolae Titulescu. Between 1907 and 1941, this building was the holiday home of the Titulescu family. The

collections include personal, suit items and office pieces, furniture, photographs, documents, letters regarding the life and activity of the Romanian diplomat Nicolae Titulescu (1882 - 1941). Since February 24th, 2000 it has become a department of the Olt County Museum.

- **The "Iancu Jianu" Memorial House** (Location: Caracal Municipality): The hajduk Iancu Jianu, a personality of the history of Caracal, spent part of his life in this house. The house was built at the end of the 18th century, being a building with a ground floor, one level and a cellar. The building was rehabilitated in various years and became after the reconstruction, the memorial "Iancu Jianu" department of the Romanati Museum, which was inaugurated on September 29th, 1959. The house itself and the valuable pieces it contains in the inventory (inkwell and dip pen, flintlock pistols, firelock, leather girdle, water pail, personal items, pieces furniture and household items, photos and documents of the Jianu family), illustrate the way of life and social troubles at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century.

- **The Slăveni Roman Castrum** (locality: Slăveni village): The Roman Castrum in Slăveni are one of the largest Roman stone castra in Oltenia (Dacia Inferior / Malvensis). Its importance is quite clear from its geostrategic position, playing the role of an important point of the Roman defence on the related border of the Olt River. The castrum is located on the right bank of the Olt River, at approx. 100 m from the river bed, on the Roman road which in ancient times connected Romula, the capital of Dacia Inferior, and the Danube line, where it ended at Islaz. Between the castrum and the Olt river, but also in the surrounding areas, there were the civil settlement, thermae and very likely also the necropolis or related necropolises. All of these monuments and the castrum are in a state of precarious conservation, being affected by the overthrow of building materials over time, as well as by the modern public works.

- **The Călățeanu Cula** (location: Piatra Olt city): Cala Călățeanu is built at the beginning of the 19th century by the boyar Călețeanu who was a bargain in the army of Tudor Vladimirescu (1780-1821). It

is placed in a dominant and strategic position, near the place where the Roman Acidava castrum is located. The cula had an enclosure wall as an element of defence, which is well preserved on the northern and western sides, where there is also the arch-shaped entrance built of masonry. On the inside the cula has a plan layout of rectangles, with a large vaulted cellar. On the second level there is a terrace, as well as on the third level there is a veranda terrace, with three cylindrical columns each and arches on each side.

- The **Ecaterina Teodoroiu Monument** (Location: Slatina Municipality): The Statue of Ecaterina Teodoroiu in Slatina is the first monument in the country raised in the memory of this heroine. Ecaterina Teodoroiu was the commander of a Romanian Army infantry squadron who fought in the battle of Marasesti. The statue of the heroine in Slatina was inaugurated on May 31st, 1925. The monument of the heroine Ecaterina Teodoroiu in Slatina is a bronze statue of natural size. The statue is placed on a concrete pedestal in three steps, made in baroque style.

- The **Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography of Corabia** (Location: Str. Cuza Voda nr. 65, the town of Corabia): The museum was established in 1951, with a mixed profile: history, ethnography, natural sciences. The building, a historical monument, was built in 1907. The museum's exhibition is structured in two sectors: folk art and old history. The collections contain archaeological pieces, weapons, tools, household utensils, ceramics, ornaments, numismatics, bronze and marble statues, funerary monuments, architectural pieces, epigraphic pieces of outstanding quality, Byzantine treasures. There are pieces of natural science, paleontology, flora and fauna in the area. A selective collection of ethnography and folk art, including tools and utensils related to agriculture, fishing, animal husbandry, traditions, pieces of folk costume.

- The **Caracal Romanati Museum** (location: Str. Iancu Jianu 24, Caracal): On September 26th, 1949, the Romanașului Museum was established. The Museum of Romanași is organised on the model of a

regional museum, representing the area of the former Romanati County, with its full history of events, which left more or less visible traces and must be known by the descendants. Currently, the museum is organised in four departments: the archaeology-history department; the "Iancu Jianu" memorial department; the plastic art department; the department of ethnography.

- **The Romula archaeological site** (location: Reșca village): Romula (diminutive from Rome, meaning "Little Rome") was a Roman town in Dacia (2nd - 3rd centuries), identified on the territory of the village of Reșca (Dobrosloveni township, Olt county) developed on an older Dacian settlement, Malva, located on the valley of Teslui River, near the right bank of Olt River. It was the capital of the Dacia Malvensis province, raised to the rank of municipium during Emperor Adrian and to that of colony during Septimius Severus. Traces of public buildings, temples, workshops, thermal baths, burning brick ovens, inscriptions, fragments of statuettes, etc. are maintained. The city was inhabited until the 4th - 6th centuries. In the 16th century, part of the castrum bricks were used to build a monastery and a tower near Reșca township at Hotărani.

- **The Caracal National Theatre** (location: str. Cuza Voda nr. 10, Caracal Municipality): The foundation stone of the Caracal Theatre was laid on July 14th, 1896, the architectural plans belonging to the Austrian architect Franz Bileck. The richness of ornaments, both inside and outside, was also noted by Nicolae Iorga in his writings. In December 2008, the renovation of the cultural building was completed, the renovation having started 22 years before.

- **The Monastery of Căluș** (location: Căluș township): The Monastery of Căluș dates back to the 16th century. The masonry works were resumed towards the end of the 16th century by the Buzești brothers, completing them on June 8th, 1588. The monastery was then surrounded by thick defence walls, and hermitages were built for the monks.

Thus, the territorial administrative units with the highest concentration of the heritage built with cultural value of national interest were identified, which were as follows:

- The municipalities of Slatina, Caracal
- The town of Corabia
- Brâncoveni, Curtișoara, Dobrosloveni, Gârcov, Giuvărăști, Leleasca, Oboga, Priseaca, Strejești townships

Cultural and artistic manifestations with national and even international participation organised at the level of Olt County are:

- + Poetry Days - Contest Festival - May, in Slatina, Drăgănești-Olt, Caracal, Corabia
- + The "Golden Ship" National Festival - September, in the town of Corabia
- + The Radu Serban National Pop Music Competition - September, in Caracal
- + "The Oltenians & Rest of the World" - National Festival of Humour - September in Slatina
- + Eugen Ionescu National Festival - November in Slatina
- + The Eva National Photography Art Competition - March in Slatina
- + "Danube Songs" - folk festival - June, in Ianca township
- + "The Tree of Life" - contest festival addressed to folk ceramists - May, in the city of Bals
- + "From Drăgănești to the Valley" Competition Festival of Doina and Ballades - September, in the city of Drăgănești-Olt

The most famous traditional customs and celebrations specific to the region of Olt County are listed below:

- + The Romanian "Călușul" - the Pentecost celebrations, in the city of Slatina
- + "The Bread Celebration" - an ethno-folkloric event marking the end of the harvest - August in the town of Scornicești
- + The celebration of the "Ia" - the celebration of the national folk costume in the area of Romanați - May June in Cezeni township

According to the OM no. 2828/2015, there are 570 historical monuments in **Mehedinți County**, of which 70 of national or universal value and 500 classified into the local cultural heritage.

No monuments are registered in the UNESCO world tangible heritage list in the territory of Mehedinți County.

The most important tourist objectives at county level, subscribed to the cultural heritage, are presented below:

- **The bust of Apollodorus of Damascus** (location: Str. Independentei nr. 2, Drobeta Turnu Severin municipality, in the courtyard of the Iron Gates Region Museum): Apollodorus of Damascus (c.160 - c. 125) was a Greek-Syrian architect who has made the construction plans for many buildings and monuments, including Trajan's Bridge over the Danube and the Trajan's Forum in Rome.

- **The bust of Emperor Trajan** (location: Central Park, Drobeta Turnu Severin): The bust of Emperor Trajan was inaugurated in 1906 - the monument is the work of the sculptor Franasovici. Marcus Ulpius Nerva Traianus (born September 18, 53, d. August 9, 117) was the Emperor of the Roman Empire between 98 and 117. During his reign, the Empire reached its maximum territorial spread. During his reign, a number of monuments included in the universal cultural heritage such as the Roman Forum (including also the Trajan's Column) and the Triumph Arch of Merida have been built.

- **The bust of King Decebal** (location: The Central Park, Drobeta Turnu Severin): King Decebal was the last ruler of Dacia in between 87 and 106. During his reign, he fought in three wars against the Roman Empire. After a military incursion to the South of Danube, he defeated a Roman invasion during the reign of Emperor Domitian, ensuring a period of independence for Dacia. During the reign of Emperor Trajan, he invaded Dacia, and Decebalus was defeated in 102 AD. He remained in power, but under the subordination of the Roman Empire. In 105 AD, Trajan invaded Dacia again, and the Dacian capital of Sarmizegetusa was destroyed in 106 AD; during this last invasion, Decebalus committed suicide to avoid capture.

- **The Water Castle** (location: str. Crișan, Water Castle Square, Drobeta Turnu Severin): The multifunctional building houses a tourist information centre, an exhibition area and an art gallery, a museum of "History of the water supply in Drobeta Turnu Severin city", a photo and sculpture exhibition, a literary café and a Belvedere area. The castle was built between 1910 and 1913 for the water supply of the city. In 1980, the Water Castle lost its utility, the tanks were emptied and started being used as offices and workshops for the company that manages the water supply and sewerage of the city.

- **The Drobeta Castrum** (location: Str. Independenței nr. 2, the "Iron Gates" Regional Museum, Drobeta Turnu Severin): The Drobeta Roman Castrum was built in parallel with Trajan's Bridge, after the first Dacian-Roman war of 101-102. The construction was completed during the reign of Emperor Hadrian (117-138). The castrum had the sides of 137.50/123 m, occupying an area of 2 hectares, with a length oriented in the North-South direction. The height of the enclosure walls was up to 4.50 m and the thickness was about 1.20 m. The area of the site is divided by a canal collecting the water springs from the high terrace of the Danube River (a former creek) in two sectors.

- **The Roman Hinova Castrum** (location: Hinova Township): In the locality of Hinova, on the bank of Danube, there was an auxiliary castrum made of stone wall with the sizes of 45 x 40 metres. The administrative unit that was in this castrum was Dacia Malvensis. On the territory of this castrum, the largest prehistoric treasury of Romania was discovered. The treasury consists of 14 bracelets different in pattern and weight, 92 pendants, 762 beads, 8,765 sparkles, one golden diadem, 4 rings, and many other items, all of gold.

- **The Medieval Citadel of Severin** (location: Bulevarul Carol I in the General Dragalina Park, Drobeta Turnu Severin Municipality): The Medieval Citadel of Severin is an ensemble of historical monuments located on the territory of Drobeta Turnu Severin. The ensemble consists of the ruins of the donjon, the ruin of the chapel, the enclosure tower wall with towers, and defence ditch. The citadel was

built by the end of the 13th century. It was built by the Hungarian Kingdom as a strategic military centre. Currently, only a very thick wall of the NE tower visible, and traces of the defence walls and other buildings inside the citadel are still visible from inside the citadel.

- **The Ada-Kaleh architectural complex** (location: Șimian township): The Ada-Kaleh architectural complex is an ensemble of historical monuments located on the territory of the Șimian village. It consists of: the bastion fort and the Turkish cemetery. Ada-Kaleh was an island on the Danube, which was flooded with the construction of the Iron Gates I hydroelectric power plant in 1970. Thus, along with the plans for building the Iron Gates reservoir, the main historical objectives on the island were demolished in 1968. In this process, only a few of the monuments existing on the island have been moved, but most of them have been lost and their reconstruction has not been achieved so far.

- **The Bibescu Mansion in Corcova** (location: Corcova Township): By the end of the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century, the Corcova estate belonging to the Bibescu family enjoyed an extraordinary development. In the early 1920s, the Bibescu family began to establish noble vine plantations here. The mansion and its surroundings were internationally known in the first half of the 19th century, but later they were no longer properly maintained. The vineyard has underwent a number of changes over time, diminishing its areas after 1989. Currently, the vineyard is owned by a company that has resumed the tradition of wine production, but on a smaller scale.

- **The Nistor cula** (locality: Cerneti village, Șimian township): It was built around 1810 by the polkovnik Istrate Sălișteanu with the purpose of serving as a dwelling during the agricultural works, watchtower for crops and shelter. In 1815 it was burned by the Turks along with the Cerneti town, and after 1821 it was rebuilt by Nistor, captain of pandurs. In 2009, work was carried out to rearrange the monument, by restoring the walls and applying treatments against

pest to wooden items (ceilings and floors). Currently, there are a number of wooden items in the rooms of the building, which were used by peasants over 200 years ago. Among these, there are wooden wine boxes, clay jugs, forks for the collecting the hay, pestle and mortar, mortar, primitive hive, small barrels, churners, and many other household items.

- **Crăcuenilor Mill** (location: Ponoare Township): The Crăcuenilor mill is a well bucket mill located on the Morilor Valley. It is made of oak and beech wood and is used even to this day for the traditional grinding of wheat or corn using water. The building was declared a historical monument.

- **The Monument of First World War Heroes** (location: The Park of Roses, municipality of Drobeta Turnu Severin): The monument was inaugurated on June 4th, 1933 and was raised at the initiative of Mayor Virgil Netta. Located in the Park of Roses, the edifice was built between 1928 and 1933 and is a tribute to Romanian soldiers killed in the line of duty during the First World War. The work was made by the architect State Balosin, the sculptor Teodor Burcă and the stonemason Carol Umberto. The monument has a beautiful crypt that shelters the bones of the heroes of Severin and Mehedinți killed in the battles of the First World War at Alion, Cerna, the Severin Plain.

- **The Art Museum - the Iron Gates Region Museum** (location: str. Rahovei, nr. 3, Drobeta Turnu Severin): The Art Museum is department within the Iron Gate Region Museum. The building that houses the Art Museum is a true architectural monument (decors in Baroque stucco and Art 1900, wall paintings, mirror mosaics and stained glass windows). At present, the museum is closed to the visiting public as it is in a process of restoration and rehabilitation.

- **The Iron Gates Region Museum** (location: str. Independenței, nr. 2, Drobeta Turnu Severin): In 1912 Professor Al. Bărcăcilă establishes the Historic Museum of Trajan High-school, which would move in 1926 in the newly built building near the Roman castrum, a building which since the beginning, it had to also shelter a museum that was to be named from now on the Museum of History and

Ethnography of Turnu Severin. After 1945 the importance of the museum and it enlarges its research area, being called the Iron Gates Region Museum. On May 15th, 1972 the museum opened in its current form, with two departments: history and natural sciences, with an aquarium where fish species from the Danube River are shown. Subsequently, the departments of ethnography and art sections were also created. The building was built in 1926.

- **The Theodor Costescu Cultural Palace** (location: Bulevardul Carol, Drobeta Turnu Severin): The construction works of the building began in 1912 and were completed in 1924. The building was designed to include seven halls: the northern wing includes three overlapped halls as library (The I.G. Bibicescu library), cinema and restaurant, forming the northern wing; the western wing includes three other halls arranged similarly to the northern wing, namely the “Dr. C.I. Istrati Museum”, the festive salon and the Helping Hall; the middle wing that includes the seventh hall located between the two wings described previously, respectively the Great Theatre Hall. The Palace also includes a summer garden that served as a cinema. The building was recently rehabilitated based on an investment financed under the Regional Operational Programme 2007-2013.

- **The neoclassical Palace Gh. Pleșa** (location: Obârșia de Câmp village, Obârșia de Câmp township): The construction of the palace began at the end of the 19th century. To build the building, components built in Italy were used, which were transported by ships on the Danube River to Gruia Port. For the interior decorations, painters from Italy and France were used, who left their mark on the unique style in Romania of the palace, similar to that of the castles on the Loire Valley in France. Today, the Pleșa Palace is not used, its interior being vandalised in the post-revolutionary period. However, the building does not show any visible signs of external structural damage, its overall preservation condition being relatively good.

- **Trajan's Bridge** (location: Str. Independenței, nr. 2, Drobeta Turnu Severin): Trajan's Bridge was a bridge built by Apollodorus of Damascus, the architect of the Column, between the spring of 103

and the spring of 105 on the Lower Danube, East of the Iron Gates, in the city of Drobeta-Turnu Severin. The purpose of the building was to facilitate the transport of the Roman troops led by Trajan and the supplies necessary for the second military campaign to conquer Dacia of the King Decebalus. The bridge was supported by twenty pillars. The twenty pillars were still visible in 1856, when the level of the Danube River was very low. In 1906, the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube decided to destroy two pillars which obstructed the navigation. In 1932, there were 16 pillars left under water, but in 1982 only 12 were found by archaeologists, perhaps the remaining four were taken by the water. But, even today one can see the first and last pillar on the banks of the Danube.

- **The ruins of the Tricule Citadel** (location: Șvinița township): Among the most spectacular underwater buildings in the world, there is also the Tricule Citadel in Mehedinți County, located mostly under the Danube. On the left bank of the Danube, in Mehedinți County, 4 km downstream of Șvinița there are three towers arranged in the corners of a hypothetical triangle, which before the Danube level rose (following the construction of the dam in 1971), they were on the bank slope. Today, two of them have the foundation sunk in the Danube and the southern tower is entirely underwater. The towers that are still visible today are 10 and 11 metres high. The three towers were built of stone, the walls having a thickness of 1.40 metres at the base and almost 0.8 metres at the top. The towers had three levels inside, used for various purposes: food storage, area surveillance and defence. The first historical attestation of the Tricule citadel refers to 1412.

- **The archaeological site of Rogova** (location: Rogova township): The site is located in Mehedinți County, Rogova township, point "La Cazărmi", 2 km East of Rogova. The first systematic researches were started here in 1995. It has been worked on every year except for 1999. The researches highlighted the existence of settlements from various eras: the period of transition to the Bronze Age - the Coțofeni culture; the Bronze Age - Verbicioara culture, the

Phases I and V; Hallstatt - Basarabi culture; Camp - Dacian settlement; Early Middle Ages - the Dridu culture. So far, five dwellings have been discovered inside of which ceramic pots, jewellery, household tools were preserved.

- **The Ostrovu Mare archaeological site** (location: Ostrovu Mare township): The archaeological site of Ostrovu Mare subscribes to the 10 archaeological monuments of national and local interest located in Dolj and Mehedinți counties belonging to the Gârla Mare culture, dating from the Bronze Age. The Gârla Mare culture is considered to be the most important art representation of the Bronze Age (1600 - 1150 BC) in Romania, outstanding by the elegance of the ceramic modelling and the treasury of the ornaments. Researchers discovered over 40 settlements of the Gârla Mare culture, the most important ones in Romania being Ostrovul Mare-Colonie, Corbului Corbului-Botul Cliuciului, Izvoarele, Ghidici-Balta Țarova, Cârna-Rampă, Nasta, Grindul Tomii and Ostrovogania, Bistreț-Plosca Cabana de Metal. Their homes were either on the surface or huts, depending on the local conditions. The interior was provided with one or two hearths that sometimes had a clay garden.

- **The ruins of Vodita Monastery** (location: Drumul Sf. Nicodim, nr. 1, Drobeta Turnu Severin): The Vodița Monastery is the oldest documented voivodal establishment in Romania. The monastery was built between 1370 and 1372 by Saint Nicodim of Tismana Monastery, with the support of the voivode Vladislav I. In 1493, due to the Turkish attacks, the monastery centre of Vodita moved to Tismana, and in 1524 all its properties go to the Tismana Monastery. The Vodita Monastery will also be recognised as an individual structure once again in a charter on 14 October 1662. It was re-established in 1991 as a monastery of monks. In the courtyard of the monastery, there was also built a wooden church with some elements from the traditional style of Maramureș.

- **The Mraconia Monastery** (location: Dubova township): The sanctuary was built on the spot of a former point for the observation and guidance of ships on the Danube River, because due to the

landscape architecture, through the narrowness of the gorge every now and then, the simultaneous passage of two ships was not possible. These maximum narrowing and widening of the river were named the Danube Kazans. Attested in documents since 1453, the Mraconia Monastery is destroyed during the Russian - Austrian - Turkish war between 1787 and 1792, being restored and demolished again in 1968¹¹.

Another monument of special importance for the tourist circuits in Mehedinți County, which is not included in the list of cultural heritage, is the **Statue of Decebalus**, also known as the **Face of Decebalus**, being the highest rock carved statue in Europe. The monument is located between the Dubova and Eșelnița townships, on the rocky shore of the Danube, in the area known as the Danube Kazans. The **statue of Decebalus is 25 metres wide and 55 metres high**, being carved according to the pattern of the sculptors in Mount Rushmore in the United States of America. **It was carved during a period of 10 years (1994-2004).**

Near the Statue of Decebalus, the Tabula Traiana can also be visited. Tabula Traiana is a Roman inscription carved in rock, dedicated to the Roman Emperor Trajan, located above the water, in the area of the Iron Gates. This panel is part of the Roman assembly of Romani monuments that form the Roman road along with the ruins of the bridge built by Trajan over the Danube. It is located 30 km from Kladovo, Serbia. After the Iron Gates Hydroelectric Power Plant was built (1969), the Roman road was flooded; in order to keep Tabula Traiana, it was decided to cut it and place it 50 m higher. It can be seen only while being on the Danube River.

Following the analysis of the relevant legislative rules for defining the cultural heritage, the territorial administrative units with the highest

¹¹ <https://www.crestinortodox.ro/biserici-manastiri/manastirea-mraconia-67832.html>

concentration of the heritage built with cultural value of national interest were identified, and these are as follows:

- Municipalities: Drobeta Turnu Severin
- Cities: Baia de Arama, Strehaia
- Townships: Balta, Breznița-Ocol, Broșteni, Butoiești, Gârla Mare, Izvoru Bârzii, Ponoarele, Șimian, Șișești, Târna

The cultural and artistic manifestations with national and even international participation organised in Mehedinți County are:

- + The Mihai Eminescu International Poetry Festival - January, in Drobeta Turnu Severin
- + The inter-county contest-festival of folk music - Iulian Andreescu - November in Drobeta Turnu Severin
- + The National Festival of Literature "The meaning of love" - July, in Drobeta Turnu Severin
- + The "Window towards us" Ethnic Festival - August, in Svinița township

The most famous traditional customs and celebrations specific to the region of Mehedinți county are listed below:

- + "Mountain, mountain, beautiful pine tree" - Pastoral Folklore Festival - July, in the city of Baia de Aramă
- + The County Folk Festival of Danube Villages - July, in Șvinița township
- + The celebration of Topolnita Cave - Traditional Festival - August, in Cireșu township
- + "Songs of Romanians everywhere" - contest of the young folk performers - October, in the city of Drobeta Turnu Severin
- + The Festival - contest of traditional music "Constantin Gherghina" - May, in the city of Orșova
- + "The Inter - Ethnic Festival of Traditional songs and dances "Otto Alscher" - August, in Orșova
- + The Plaiul Cloșani folklore festival - July, in Bala township
- + The Lilac festival - in May, Ponoarele township

- + Longing blossoms in spring" - Folk Festival of the Danubius ensemble in Drobeta Turnu Severin
- + Lily of the Valley celebrations - May, in Vânju Mare township
- + Vine and Wine Festival - October, in Vânju Mare township
- + "Linden Flower" Field Feast - July, in Greci township
- + The Acacia Festival - May, in the Hinova township
- + Fig Tree Festival - September, in Svinița township

III.4. Presentation of the Cultural Heritage of Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven (BG)

The main cultural tourist objectives located on the territory of the **Vidin district** are as follows:

➤ **The “Baba Vida” citadel.** It is the only medieval castle in Bulgaria preserved entirely. It is located on the bank of Danube in the North-East side of Vidin. The castle is over 2000 years old, and is built on the remains of the ancient Bononiia citadel. It is accessible to visitors only from the North side, where the entrance tower is. Currently, to enter the citadel, visitors walk on a newly built stone bridge that leads to the inner courtyard. Here Summer "Vida" Theatre is open, which is one of the largest attractions of the Vidin city. Currently, two towers are open to visitors. Inside the city there is also a fortress, where you can see medieval torture devices. "Baba Vida" is one of the most well preserved medieval defence centres in Bulgaria and is often used as shooting decoration for various videos.

➤ **The “Kastru Martis” citadel - Kula city.** The Kula city is located 35 km southwest of Vidin. The remains of the ancient "Castra Martis" citadel are right in the city centre. The entrance to the citadel is from the southern side. The citadel is a 40x40m square fortress with a round tower at each corner. Of the four towers, the one located in southeast is currently in the best state of preservation, being also the most impressive one in terms of its height which is over 16 metres. The appearance of the citadel is

linked to the history of the Bulgarian territories during the Roman and Byzantine periods (1st - 6th centuries). The ruins of the citadel are located in the "Castra Martis" historical park. Near them, the museum collection can be visited, with the discoveries made inside the citadel. The citadel consists of two parts - a small square fortress - Quadriburgo and a castle located south of it, which are built in different periods. The museum collection exhibits various tools: for agriculture, for cattle breeding, for stonemasons, for builders, etc., used in the auxiliary farm of the military part located in the citadel. The inhabitants' lifestyle is highlighted by the clay lamps and by the various pots formed, which are covered with green and brown glazes. Bronze filaments and coins dating were also discovered, dating since the 4 - 5th century. The visit of the "Kastr Martis" citadel can be combined with a walk in Vidin or with a visit to the Rocks of Belogradchik and the "Venets" and "Magura" caves.

➤ **The "Kaleto" citadel - the Belogradchik city.** The Belogradchik citadel "Kaleto" is one of the best preserved ones in Bulgaria. **It is located** 1 km away from the centre of the city, and there is a road access to it. Inside, the citadel has three separate courtyards connected by fortified gates. The citadel offers a wonderful panoramic and picturesque view to the Belogradchik Rocks. Near the "Kaleto" citadel there is the Astronomical Observatory of Belogradchik.

➤ **The "Uspenie Bogorodnichno" Spring Monastery ("Dormition of the Mother of God").** The Izvorski Monastery is located 2 km South of Izvor village, 9 km from the Dimovo town and about 40 km from Vidin. Currently, Izvorski Monastery is a monastic place of monks. The assembly of the monastery includes various buildings, most of which were built or rehabilitated around 1836 by the Abbot Joseph. These also include the Church "St. George", which, despite the many reconstructions, it kept its original appearance of 1612 and some of its frescoes (19th century, the work of Pop Ioanikiy). Inside the Izvorski Monastery, there also operates an accommodation unit that

can accommodate up to 20 people (the rooms have their own bathroom and satellite television). The dining room of the Monastery can accommodate up to 40 people. There is a spring in the monastery, which is known for its curative properties, particularly for the treatment of ophthalmic disorders. Near the monastery, there is the Derenovets dam, 18 km away there is the Magura Cave and Rabisha Lake, 24 km away there are the Belogradchik Rock, and Venetsa Cave is also nearby.

The main cultural tourist objectives located on the territory of the **Montana district** are presented below:

➤ **The “Kastra ad Montanezium” citadel.** It is located close to the Montana city, on the Kaleto hill. Many excavations and archaeological studies have been carried out on the territory of the citadel, which provided important details and information on the history of the city. Next to the citadel, there is also an ancient stone sanctuary dedicated to Apollo and Diana, built during the Roman Empire. The Kastra ad Montanezium citadel and the settlement around it were destroyed at the end of the 6th century by the Slavs and Avars. Currently, the Castra ad Montanezium citadel has been mostly restored and, together with the Kaleto hill, it has become a historical and cultural monument in the region.

➤ **The “Lapidarium” archaeological exhibition.** The archaeological exhibition of epigraphic monuments of the Roman age includes 56 archaeological vestiges and is located in the area of the ancient city of Montana (in the Priests’ Garden park), covering an area of 700m². Nearby, there is the cultural Mihaylova kashta cultural objective and the Orthodox church “St. Cyril and Methodius”. The marble inscriptions included in the exhibition are the only ones of this kind to describe this provincial Roman city and which contain valuable information about the history and culture of Montana from the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

➤ **The Ethnographic Museum, the House of Ivan Vazov and the Art Gallery in the town of Berkovitsa.** The Ethnographic Museum in Berkovitsa, which operates in the Sarbinskata cashta building, presents the material and spiritual culture of the city and of the region. In the various collections of the museum, visitors can see the exhibits of the Berkovska ceramics, the Chiprovtsi carpets, costumes of the Karakachans, urban dresses since the '20s of the 20th century. The museum also presents the typical crafts of the region - ceramic, copper pots, silk production, etc. The Ethnographic Museum in Berkovitsa often hosts temporary and themed exhibitions and collections. Concerts, book launches, demonstrations of various trades, etc are also organised inside the museum. It is included on the list of the main 100 national tourist sites in Bulgaria. The entrance ticket for the Ethnographic Museum allows visitors to visit two more tourist attractions in the city. One of them is the "Ivan Vazov" museum-house. The poet Ivan Vazov (1850-1921) lived and wrote in it between 1879 and 1880. The house was built in the beginning of the 19th century, and in 1964 the house has been declared an architectural and cultural monument of national importance. The second objective to be visited is the Art Gallery of the city, which is located in the courtyard of the "St. Nicholas Chudotvorets" church. The gallery hosts over 1,400 works of art - graphics, caricatures, sculptures, etc. The information materials for the Ethnographic Museum and other tourist places in the city can be found in the Tourist Information Centre in Berkovitsa.

➤ **The "Chiprovtsi" Ethnographic Museum.** The History Museum in Chiprovtsi was founded in 1988. Its inauguration coincided with the national celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Chiprovtsi uprising outburst. The exhibition area in the main building begins with archaeological discoveries covering a long chronological period - from the Bronze Age to the late Middle Ages. The five exhibition halls present events and processes that highlight Chiprovtsi in the Bulgarian and world common historical space. The first hall is

dedicated to mining; the separate stages of mining and ore processing are presented, with emphasis on the new technologies brought by the Saxon miners. In the second hall, the works of the Chiprovți gilding school (16th - 17th centuries) and the distribution at pan-European scale. Third hall is the place and the role of Catholicism in the life of the inhabitants of Chiprovți in the 17th century - educational activities, diplomatic and missionary activity of the personalities of the Catholic clergy, outbreak and evolution of the revolt of Chiprovți and the later migration movements in the Romanian and Croatian countries. In the fourth hall, key periods in the development of Ciprovți carpets are presented. And church paintings are exhibited in the fifth hall.

➤ **Klisura Monastery.** The Klisura Monastery is located in the Barziya village, between the towns of Varshets and Berkovitsa, at the foot of Todorini Kukli peak, in the Western Stara Planina Mountains and is the fourth largest one in the whole of Bulgaria. Interestingly, the monastery has the status of separate territorial unit. The Klisura or "St. Cyril and Methodius" Monastery is currently a monastery of nuns since 2008 (it was formerly a monastery of monks). It was a centre of spiritual life since the second Bulgarian Empire (year 1240) and was completely restored in the 19th century. There is an icon painting workshop in the holy monastery where painting techniques used in the old school of Ohrid are applied. The monastery also has accommodation places for tourists.

The main cultural tourist objectives located on the territory of the **Vratsa district** are presented below:

➤ **The "Radetski" ship - city of Kozloduy.** The "Radetski" Ship National Museum is a unique floating museum that reminds of the fatidic night of 1876, when Hristo Botev and his troops crossed the Danube in this vessel, disguised as gardeners to fight in the revolution against the Ottoman occupation. Today, the "Radetsky" ship, located in a special site built in Kozloduy, is an authentic

replica of the real one. It was built with donations from the population. The exhibition in the museum presents the life and work of Hristo Botev. Among the exhibit, there are the remains of the actual ship, donated by the captain of the ship, after the destruction of the vessel by the Austrian maritime transport company. They are the flag, a copy of Botev's letter in French to the commander and passengers and two planks from "Radetski" board. Every year, at the end of May, a national march is organised, called "Following the footsteps of Botev's group". He starts off from the Kozloduy coast and crosses a route of 120 kilometres in order to reach the Okolchitsa peak, where Botev was killed. There it also 35-metre monument dedicated to the Bulgarian heroes there.

➤ **The Ivan Zambin museum-house - Vratsa.** In Ivan Zambin's house, ethnographic exhibitions are set up, presenting the traditional life of Vratsa, the artistic crafts as well as well as traditional metiers (viticulture and winemaking, sericulture and silk industry).

➤ **The "Kaleto" archaeological Complex - the town of Mezdra.** The complex is located on a rocky ridge on the left bank of the Iskar River, in the south-western part of Mezdra, being a historical vestige with a history of 70 centuries. The hill is naturally protected and located in a strategic location, where major roads intersect, linking the Danube Plain to the Sofia field, to the East and West of Bulgaria. Here the ruins of two fortified settlements since the end of the Stone Age - copper and eneolites were discovered, which were destroyed by fires. They were dated between the end of the 5th Millennium and the first half of the 4th millennium BC. Many discoveries from the "Kaleto" show that at the end of the Stone-Copper Age, the settlement near the Mezdra city has developed as a craftsmanship centre. The history of the "Kaleto" settlement continued for centuries, when in these places there were a Roman citadel in these places in the 2nd century, a pagan worshipping centre in the 3rd century and a fortified

village in the 4th - 6th centuries, which continued to develop in the late Roman and Byzantine period. In 2013, the complex was restored and turned into a tourist attraction within the "History, culture and nature - tourists attractions of the Mezdra Municipality" financed by non-reimbursable European funds. Some of the discoveries, found during the excavations, are displayed in a permanent exhibition hall. The visit of the restored citadel can be combined with visits of other tourist objectives in the area of Mezdra and Vratsa. For example, 7 km from the complex there is the *place Govedarnika* with 30 small caves and niches arranged between cliffs that are 40 metres high, where paintings of anthropomorphic and abstract images were discovered. 11 km away, there is the *phenomenon in Ritlite rock*, and 31 km away, there is the famous cave *Ledenika*. The Cherepish "*Uspenie Bogorodichno*" Monastery can be visited nearby, which is located 14 km from Kaleto.

➤ **The Cherepish Monastery.** It is declared as a cultural monument of national importance. After major reconstruction and restoration works were completed in the summer of 2006, the Cherepish Monastery provided visitors also with accommodation services (35 places), respectively serving meals. The kitchen offers monastic cuisine and traditional Bulgarian dishes.

The main cultural tourist objectives located on the territory of the **Pleven district** are presented below:

➤ **the "Plevenska epopeya 1877-1878" Panorama.** The monument was built in 1977 to celebrate the 100th anniversary since the liberation of Pleven from the Ottoman domination. The monument is located in the Museum of the Skobelev Park, on the South-western outskirts of the city. The "Plevenska epopeya 1877-1878" Panorama includes four halls. The introductory hall, six paintings of 4 to 3.60 metres reflect moments of the Bulgarian history and from the Russian-Turkish war in the years 1877-1878. The panoramic hall has a diameter of 40 metres and a panoramic view

canvas is exposed therein, which is 115 m long and 15 m wide, mounted on the wall, illustrating the dramatic events of the third attack in Pleven. The dioramic hall is smaller than the panoramic one and the canvas exposed in this hall describes the last battle of Pleven in the valley of Vit River on December 10th, 1877. The size of the canvas is 17m long and 5m wide. In the final hall, two paintings present Osman Pasha's surrender and the passage of the Balkan Mountains in winter by the Russian army. The monument also has a roof open to visitors, which provides a panoramic view of the surroundings.

➤ **The "Storgoziya" citadel.** The ruins of the Storgoziy citadel are located in the Kailăka Park, about 4 km south of Pleven. It is built on a high plateau on the left bank of the Tuchenitsa river, naturally protected by the steep banks of the river. Two fortification gates, three fortification reinforcement towers, ruins of residential buildings, a choreum (public warehouse for cereals) were discovered as a result of the archaeological excavations. On the eastern side of the Storgoziya citadel, the ruins of an early Christian basilica from the 4th century were found, with impressive sizes - 45.20 m long and 22.20 m wide. The archaeological discoveries in Storgoziya prove that this fortified settlement was active until the end of the 6th century.

➤ **Ulpiya Eskus - Ghighen village.** The ruins of the Roman and Byzantine city and the Roman road station Ulpiya Eskus are located in the North-West of the Ghighen village, 5 km South from the point of the Iskar (Eskus) river draining into the Danube (Istrum). However, the ruins are in a state of advanced degradation, given the fact that two years ago a fire was recorded, which destroyed much of the artefacts. The access for tourists is free of charge. Ulpiya Eskus is included in a bicycle route addressed to tourists .

➤ **Skalna tsarkva "St. Stefan".** The building was part of a complex of monasteries from the 10th - 11th century. Currently, there is only the church, which is carved in rocks, and is located on

the outskirts of the city (approximately 1 km away) from the Nikopol city, in place of "Plavala". There are traces of frescoes on the walls, and are from different periods of the Christianity rise (3rd and 4th centuries).

➤ **Shishman's citadel - the city of Nikopol.** The Nikopol citadel, also known under the name of the citadel of Tsar Ivan Shishman, is located on a hill, at the western end of Nikopol city. It is 350m long and 250m wide. It was a fortified citadel of strategic importance and a well-protected harbour. The archaeological excavations revealed parts of the fortification wall and buildings from the period of the second Bulgarian Kingdom, when Tsar Ivan Shishman moved in the citadel after leaving Tarnovo. According to the chroniclers, Nikopol was the best fortified citadel of the Tsar at that time. But the objective is not open to visitors and can only be viewed from outside the walls.

Regarding the main cultural traditions and festivals that are celebrated and organised regularly in the districts of Vidin, Pleven, Montana and Vratsa, they are listed in the table below:

Table no. 1 The most famous cultural traditions and festivals organised in the districts of Vidin, Montana, Pleven and Vratsa in Bulgaria

No.	Main location	Description	Organisation period
1.	Belogradchik Rocks, in the first courtyard of the "Kaleto" citadel	"Opera of the peaks" Festival. For three days, the opera and ballet performances take place among the natural landscapes of the Belogradchik Rocks and the Kaleto citadel. The festival also includes a show in the "Magurata" cave, respectively a work by Wagner: "Gods,	At the end of July or early August. The shows inside the citadel start at 8:00. The show in the Magura cave starts at 11:00.

No.	Main location	Description	Organisation period
		Gnomes, Dwarves, Elves." The show lasts 2 hours and 30 minutes; the action is divided into three acts, each of them being carried out in a different room of the cave: the first part is carried out at the entrance to the cave, the second one on the halls of the cave, and the third one ends with the "Cavalry of the elves" at the exit from the cave and with wine tasting from the "Magura" cellar.	
2.	Vinarovo village , municipality of Novoselo, the ethnographic complex "Sredna cheshma"	The "The parental hearth with roots for centuries" . The ceremony aims to preserve, popularise and transmit to younger generations the preserved folklore and the ethnographic richness of the native land. Dance ensembles, singing groups, instrumentalists and various folk customs take part in the festivities.	The last Saturday of August. Starting time: 9:30
3.	Chuprene Village	The folkloric celebration of Turks "Kada kum prase i ti brechu" . The festivities include many folk dances, songs, concerts of invited artists, contests	In mid June (the date changes every year). The celebration lasts three days (Friday, Saturday, Sunday)

No.	Main location	Description	Organisation period
		and tastings of traditional dishes from the Bulgarian-Serb cuisine.	day, Sunday).
4.	Vidin city, In the hall of the State Philharmonic and in the "Bdintsi" Square	The folkloric "Badnik" celebration. During the event, an exhibition - tasting of traditional meals of Christmas Eve is organised. "Sorcova" workshops are organised and the "Badnik" bread is kneaded	During the week before Christmas Eve (the exact date is set every year)
5.	Vidin City	The International Folklore Festival of Wallachian songs and dances. During the festival, dozens of folkloric ensembles from Bulgaria, Romania, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia take part. During the festival, conferences, round tables, exhibitions are also organised.	The event lasts two days and is organised in October - November (the exact date is set every year).
6.	Chuprene Village	The "Rock under Mindjur" Festival. The event was organised for the first time in June 2018. Both famous artists (to open and close the event) and rock bands that are new on the music market participate during the festival. The location is	Three-day event, organised two weeks after the Turks' celebration.

No.	Main location	Description	Organisation period
		provided with camping places and food mobile shops.	
7.	The Balkan of Vratsa, near the Ledenika cave	<p>The "Ledenika" National Folklore Festival.</p> <p>Dance groups and folk singers as well as individual performers participate at the festival. Traditional crafts are also presented by local craftsmen. The event gathers thousands of lovers of Bulgarian traditions and customs. The participants in the "Ledenika" folkloric event have to wear a folk costume or clothes with elements of Bulgarian embroidery.</p>	The last weekend of June
8.	Asenovo village, Nikopol municipality	<p>The cuisine and folkloric festival « delicacies of Banat - traditions from my village".</p> <p>Dozens of chefs with hundreds of different dishes attend the festival, participating in three contests. The folkloric program has representative compositions of the authentic folklore in the region. Traditionally, a dish from Banat is cooked in the</p>	At the beginning of August. The exact date is set every year.

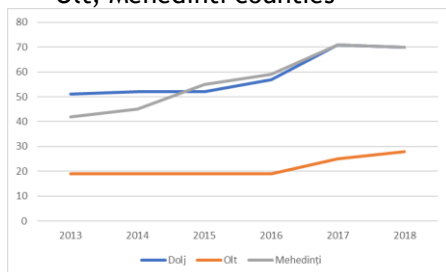
No.	Main location	Description	Organisation period
		so-called Pan of the Brave. All types of dishes can be tasted by the visitors.	

Source: Processing of data collected by authors, 2019

III.5. Presentation of the Data Collected from the Office Research regarding the Tourism Sector in Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți Counties (RO)

According to the statistics provided by the National Institute of Statistics in Romania, the tourism sector has registered a positive evolution between 2013 and 2018 in Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți counties, both in terms of the number of structures and the accommodation capacity at the local level, and of the number of tourists who have transited the area.

Figure no. 1 Total number of tourist reception structures between 2013 and 2018, in Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți counties



Mehedinți County has registered the biggest increase in the number of existing accommodation structures, in 2018 there being approximately 70% more tourist accommodation units compared to 2013.

An ascending evolution was also registered in Dolj and Olt counties, but at a lower pace.

Source: INS data processing, 2019

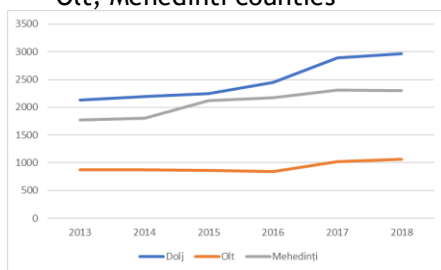
However, the number of accommodation structures in the 3 counties analysed is low, their cumulated number representing in 2018 only 2% of the total existing at national level.

Regarding the types of tourist reception structures operating in the 3 counties analysed, in the Dolj and Olt counties most of the existing units are classified into the category of hotels, while in Mehedinți county, the agrotouristic guesthouses and tourist guesthouses are predominant. This indicator demonstrates the adaptability of the market to the existing tourist requirements, Dolj and Olt counties focusing on business and event tourism, while Mehedinți County is focused on rural tourism, recreational tourism and ecotourism.

As far as the accommodation capacity is concerned, this has also registered a positive evolution during the analysed period, however at a lower pace compared to the number of accommodation units established, which leads to the conclusion that the newly established structures have a smaller number of accommodation places compared to those existing before 2013.

The most significant evolution in relation to the accommodation places created between 2013 and 2018 was registered by Dolj County (+ 40%), followed by Mehedinți (+ 30%) and Olt (+ 22%) counties. Thus, on average, the number of accommodation places provided by the newly created tourist structures was 44 places for Dolj county, 21 places for Olt County and 19 places for

Figure no. 2 The total accommodation capacity of the tourist reception structures between 2013 and 2018 in Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți counties

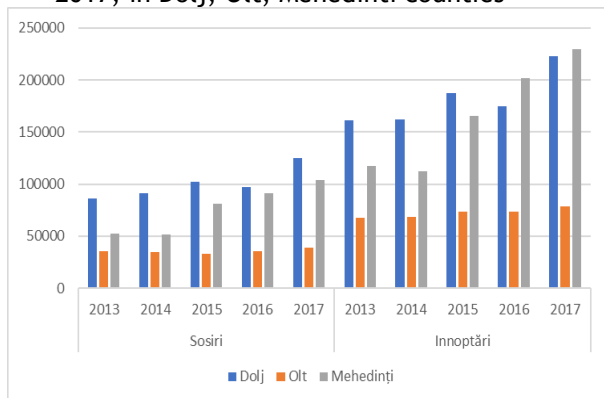


Source: INS data processing, 2019

Mehedinți county. The official statistics regarding the arrivals and tourists' overnight stays are available till 2017. Between 2013 and 2017, all the analysed counties have registered increases in the number of arrivals and overnight stays.

Figure no. 3 Total number of arrivals and Mehedinți County

overnight stays of tourists between 2013 and 2017, in Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți counties



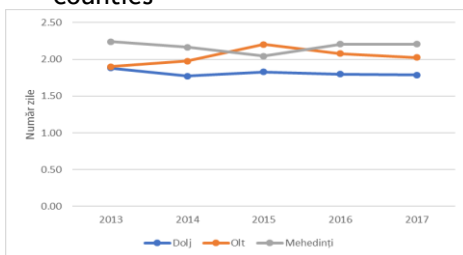
Source: INS data processing, 2019

outstands in the analysed period with the best evolution of this indicator, the total number of arrivals and overnight stays being doubled during 5 years. On the other hand, Olt County has much lower increases in the number of arrivals (+ 9%) and

overnight stays (+ 16%) over the same period. The performance of Dolj county is an average one with a 45% increase in the number of arrivals and 38% in the number of overnight stays between 2013 and 2017.

Despite the increases registered for the previously presented indicators, the average duration of a stay remained relatively constant or decreased slightly in the Dolj and Mehedinți counties between 2013 and 2017. Only Olt County has registered a positive evolution of this indicator, from 1.9 days in 2013 to 2.03 days in 2017.

Figure no. 4 The average duration of a tourist stay between 2013 and 2017 in Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți counties

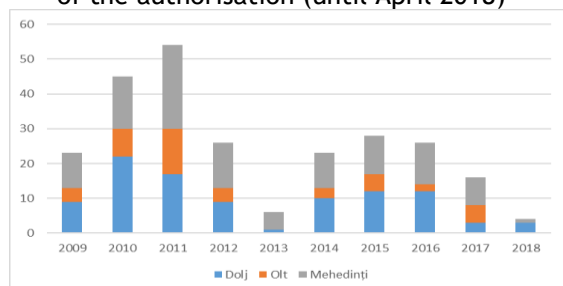


Source: INS data processing, 2019

The list of operators authorised for the accommodation services is regularly drafted and updated by the Ministry of Tourism. According to the latest update in April 2018 at the level of Dolj, Mehedinți, Olt

counties, a total of 251 units were authorised, representing only 1.97% of the total existing at national level.

Figure no. 5 Accommodation units authorised according to year of issuance of the authorisation (until April 2018)



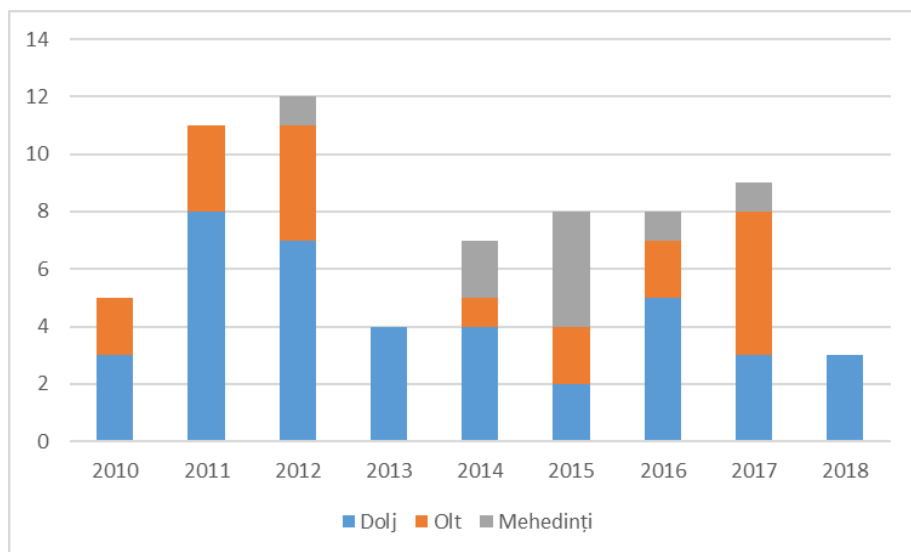
As for the year of obtaining the operating authorisation, most of the functional units were set up in 2010, 2011 and the least in 2013. Generally, most of the units were set up in Mehedinți County.

Source: Processing of data provided by the Ministry of Tourism, 2018

The list of authorised travel agencies is regularly drafted and updated by the Ministry of Tourism. According to the latest update made in May 2018, at the level of Dolj, Mehedinți, Olt counties, a total of 67 travel agencies were authorised, representing only 2.53% of the total existing at national level.

As for the year of obtaining the operating authorisation, most travel agencies were set up in 2011, 2012 and the least in 2013. Generally, most of the travel agencies were set up in Dolj County.

Figure no. 6 Accommodation units authorised according to the year of issuance of the authorisation (until April 2018)



Source: Processing of data provided by the Ministry of Tourism, 2018

By comparatively analysing the evolution of the number of accommodation units and of the existing travel agencies, it can be observed that the year 2011 was marked by a sustained development of both sectors. A surprising element is, however, the reduced number of travel agencies operating in Mehedinți county (9) related to the number of accommodation units existing in this area (70).

III.6. Presentation of the Data Collected from the Office Research on the Tourism Sector in Vidin, Montana, Vratsa, Pleven Districts (BG)

Following a survey organised by the vakancia.bg website attended by 220 tourists from Bulgaria, by which it was analysed how hotels are selected for spending the holidays, the following results were obtained:

Table no. 2 Factors that influence the decision of Bulgarian tourists in selecting an accommodation unit

* Score assigned according to the importance of each factor according to the respondent's opinion (1 = of very little importance, 5 = of very high importance)

<i>Analysed factors</i>	1	2	3	4	5
The hotel has a good location (close to the landmark)	1%	2%	11%	31%	55%
The hotel provides cheap accommodation	1%	7%	26%	32%	34%
High level of cleaning in the room and in the common areas	1%	1%	7%	23%	68%
The hotel offers a wide range of services - reception 24 hours, information on destinations, car rentals and bikes, trips, massages, etc.	16%	26%	26%	18%	14%
The hotel provides many facilities - swimming pool, SPA centre, sports facilities, wireless internet, common room (lobby) and others	4%	6%	25%	30%	35%
There are positive reviews on the Internet provided by people who visited this hotel	4%	6%	18%	31%	41%
You have positive reviews from friends and acquaintances , who visited this hotel in the past	2%	3%	14%	27%	54%
You have access to many good quality pictures of the hotel	3%	8%	17%	33%	39%
You have accurate information about the prices and other features of the hotel before making a request	1%	3%	6%	22%	68%
The hotel offers a wide range of facilities for families with children - playground for children, swimming pools for children, toys, escalades, safe yard, entertainer	15%	8%	23%	21%	33%

Analyzed factors

1 2 3 4 5

and others

The **communication** with the hotel during the search and during the booking process gives you a sense of trust and professionalism

1%	4%	8%	23%	63%
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Your age is...?

under 20 : **3%**
 20 - 29: **16%**
 30 - 39: **35%**
 40 - 49: **28%**
 50 - 59: **16%**
 over 60: **2%**

Your gender is...?

Male: **21%**
 Female: **79%**

How do you travel most frequently?

With friends: **22%**
 As a couple: **28%**
 family and children: **44%**
 Other: **6%**

Source: Processing of data provided by vakancia.bg, 2019

From the quoted data, it is obvious that for more than half of the tourists, it is very important that the hotel has a good location, meaning it is close to a natural or cultural and historical landmark. According to the statistics in the past five years, published on the website of the National Institute of Statistics in Bulgaria, the number of accommodation places with more than 10 beds, respectively the number of overnight stays of tourists in the territory of the 4 counties analysed at the level of the study are:

Table no. 1 Number of accommodation places and number of overnight stays in 2012-2017 in Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven districts

District	Years					
Vidin	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Accommodation	33	36	36	32	33	30/

District	Years					
places with more than 10 beds / number of beds						856
Number of overnight stays	52,249	58,229	46,478	46,451	51,090	57,283
Montana	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Accommodation places with more than 10 beds / number of beds	30	26	27	27	27	26/ 1,179
Number of overnight stays	71,917	63,694	63,096	62,217	63,772	62,747
Vratsa	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Accommodation places with more than 10 beds / number of beds	25	29	30	29	28	27/ 899
Number of overnight stays	72,679	75,689	80,576	77,157	95,703	92,402
Pleven	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Accommodation places with more than 10 beds / number of beds	14	23	29	29	26	26/ 1285
Number of overnight stays	80,863	89,102	87,331	87,645	80,962	79,747

Source: Processing of data provided by INS Bulgaria, 2018

One may notice that there is a constant trend of low occupancy of the accommodation spaces in the 4 districts analysed, according to the national statistics.

Table no. 2 Annual average occupancy of accommodation spaces in Vidin, Montana, Vratsa, Pleven districts

District	Annual average occupancy / 1 bed
Vidin	67 days/year
Montana	53 days/year
Vratsa	103 days/year
Pleven	62 days/year

Source: Processing of data provided by INS Bulgaria, 2018

The reasons that have led to this situation can be both internal/private and external/global. The evolution of the indicators is analysed in detail for each district in the following paragraphs.

In the Vidin district: Tourism is a sector with a great potential for development and is of fundamental importance for the economic development of the district. Despite the existing traditions, the richness of the natural and cultural-historic landmarks in this area, a decrease in the number of tourists has been registered in recent years. However, in 2009, along with the nominalisation of the Belogradchik rocks in the campaign for the "Seven Natural Wonders of the World", a significant increase in the number of tourists was registered and consequently, an increase in the number of accommodation places. But since 2010, the number of visitors began to decrease again at an accelerated pace, and by 2012 the number of accommodation places also declined constantly, given the decrease in the tourism activity in the area. However, the incomes made from tourists' accommodations in recent years in the Vidin District are growing. The incomes mainly come from the stays of tourists who seek to visit the cultural-historical and natural sites. This demonstrates the need to include the Vidin district on the routes of national and international tourism operators and the need to promote the websites of the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

Despite the unfavourable trends in the development of the sector, there are conditions for tourism development. The area is ecologically clean, with no major pollutants, with favourable natural and anthropic tourism resources.

The natural and cultural tourist attractions of the area and its rich history make the region an interesting place for various types of tourism. There are prerequisites for the development of cultural and historical tourism, ecological tourism, hunting and fishing tourism, cruise tourism, speleological tourism, balneary tourism.

In recent years, the local public authorities in Vidin district have undertaken a number of measures aimed at facilitating the development of the tourist sector such as: a Regional Tourism Council has been set up; projects have been developed in the field of tourism; contacts have been established with Serbia, Romania, Germany and Italy to discuss and plan project partnerships and attract the investments in the tourism community.

However, in order to ensure the transformation of tourism into a priority sector of the local economy and to achieve a good level of quality of the tourism product offered, additional efforts are needed, such as: to attract significant foreign and local investments; to build a modern material and technical base; to develop quality tourism products; to invest in additional attractions in the tourist places; to provide quality training and retraining of staff; to develop the advertising and information infrastructure; to improve the state of the technical infrastructure that serves tourism; to stimulate the operators to diversify the tourist services they provide.

In the Montana district: On the territory of the district, there are more than 600 monuments declared to be sites of national and local importance. In the Municipality of Montana, most monuments are classified in one of the following categories: residential and public buildings; archaeological monuments; cultural sites; historical sites and artistic monuments outdoors (usually located in parks). The archaeological heritage of the Montana municipality has a great cultural and historical and exhibition potential.

On the territory of the district, the distribution of cultural and natural monuments varies according to the locality. In some villages,

churches are also declared cultural monuments of national or local importance. Unlike municipalities, the monuments existing in the rural environment are mainly old buildings from the Renaissance period, archaeological sites - ancient and medieval ruins and settlements.

The clean character of the area creates opportunities for the development of various types of tourism - for residential activities, rural, mountainous, balneary tourism or for leisure activities - skiing, hunting and fishing, water sports. The most developed branch of tourism in Montana district is the balneary tourism, which has a large share in the incomes from the tourism activities in the area. Approximately 55% of revenues from the accommodations are done in the Vârșeț municipality, where the balneary tourism is the main form of spending free time.

In the Vratsa district: In the last 10 years, a constant trend of decrease in the accommodation places has been registered. In this context, there is however a constant increase in the number of overnight stays, as well as a high annual average occupation per 1 bed - 103 days. However, the rate of income growth for the accommodation units has decreased significantly, which may be explained by the lack of accommodation places in units classified in the category of 4 stars or more. In this sense, it is obvious that it is required to undertake additional steps to develop high quality tourism services, including a material base for them to thus generate a high added value. The factors for the development of these services exist, the areas benefiting from a varied natural, cultural and historical heritage of the varied. It is important, however, that it is properly capitalised and in a sustainable manner.

A positive trend in the district is represented by the existence of a relatively high number of guesthouses and hotels managed by local families, as they create opportunities for the development of

innovative tourism products and packages based on the local cultural, historical and natural advantages. The success of future tourist products and packages is a prerequisite for the availability of various assessments and the development of strategies at local level for the development of tourism products, as a result of the various partnership and cross-border projects.

The efforts of the local administrations to prioritise the tourism sector and to take measures for its sustainable development, have a positive impact. The presence of natural and cultural and historical landmarks is also a positive influence.

The tourist packages covering the territory of the Vratsa district or at least one component of these packages have been created based on the tourist objectives existing in the territory and renowned at national level. These include the Regional History Museum - Vratsa, the "Botev pat" Memorial Complex" and the Ledenika " Cave, the National Museum - the "Radetski" ship, the "Vrachanski Balkan" Natural Park. Concerning the leisure activities, the "Prikazkata" amusement park, paragliding and hang gliding clubs, "Gerak" veloklub, the "Parshevitsa" skiing school for children operate in the territory of the district.

In the municipality of Vratsa, a tourist package may be purchased, which contains 7 distinct objectives and includes sites of national importance such as Baba Iliitsa Museum, the "Ledenika" Cave, the "Vratstsata" Passage, the "Sedemte prestola" Monastery, the "Shuplovitsa" place, "Okolcitsa" Peak, the "Bojia most" natural phenomenon, the Cerepish Monastery and the like.

In the Pleven district: Tourism as a whole is constantly developing, but the potential of the area is not fully exploited. The main tourist destination is Pleven. The most visited sites are the Regional Museum of History and the "Plevenska Epopeia 1877-1878" Panorama.

In the investment priorities of the municipalities in the Pleven region, tourism is only 10th in terms of importance. This is why no sufficient funds are planned for its development.

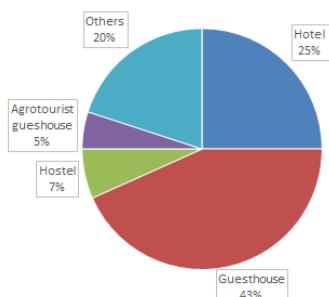
In the Pleven district, fishing tourism has the highest development potential. Currently, there is also an increasingly greater emphasis on promoting the cultural heritage in the area as a prerequisite for tourism development. Along with the development of fishing tourism and with the growth of the visibility of cultural and historical heritage objectives outside the municipality of Pleven, there is an opportunity to create new tourist routes and tourist products.

III.7. Presentation of the Data Collected from the Field Research at the Level of Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți Counties (RO)

In Dolj, Olt and Mehedinți counties, 120 questionnaires were applied among the representatives of the tourist accommodation structures. 10 interviews were also carried out with representatives of the public authorities, travel agencies and tourist objectives integrated within the natural or cultural heritage of the area.

Most of the respondents to the questionnaires (58%) are located in Mehedinți County (mainly in Dubova, Eșelnița townships and in Drobeta Turnu Severin municipality), 32% are located in Dolj County (mainly in Craiova) and 10% in Olt County (mainly on the territory of Caracal municipality).

Figure no. 7 Classification of respondents depending on the type of accommodation structures



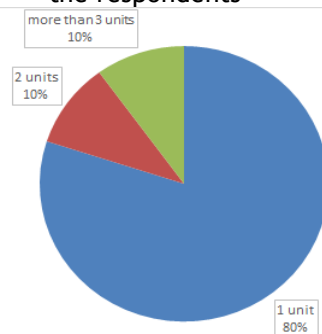
Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2019

Regarding the type of accommodation structures participating in the field research, the most numerous are guesthouses (43% of respondents) and hotels (25% of respondents). In terms of the classification, over 65% of the units are classified into the category of 3 stars followed

by 4 stars (17%) and 2 stars (16%). The average authorised area for providing the accommodation services calculated for all the respondents is approximately 1,000 m² (taking into account both the built-up area and the adjacent lands owned by the unit) and the average number of rooms is 18/unit. Most of the respondents (60%) started the business between 2011 and 2019, and 33% of the respondents operate on the market since 2001-2010.

96 of the respondents (80%) have shown that they currently manage a single accommodation structure. This leads to the conclusion that most of the accommodation structures in Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți counties are individual businesses, there are few

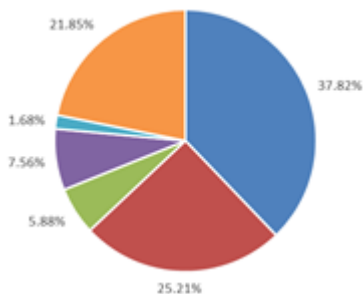
Figure no. 8 Number of accommodation units managed by the respondents



Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2019

accommodation units to be included in a chain of similar structures that would also operate in other areas outside the analysed territory.

Figure no. 9 Respondents' motivation to start the business



Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2019

Regarding the motivation to operate in the tourism sector, 38% of the respondents have shown that they decided to set up the accommodation unit due to the touristic potential of the area considering

the natural and cultural heritage elements existing in its territory. 25% of the respondents have shown their entrepreneurship as main motivation, while 22% motivated this decision in light of the increased demand for accommodation spaces at local level. Other reasons specified by the respondents, but to a lesser extent are: the economic development of the territory, which leads to the business or transit tourism development, taking over the business from another owner or the inheritance of the business, as well as the necessity to complete the services provided to the tourists at the level of that location.

From the perspective of the evolution of the number of tourists at local level in the last 5 years, more than half of the respondents (56%) have shown that the number of tourists increased significantly while 33% of the respondents considered that the number of tourists was relatively constant or increased at a slow pace.

According to the information collected through the interviews carried out, the touristic image of Dolj county had a positive evolution in recent years, especially in terms of the results of the investments

made to rehabilitate the heritage objectives (by using the non-reimbursable funds). An important advantage is also provided by the operation of the International Airport of Craiova, at the level of which new passenger transport flights are implemented regularly, particularly to destinations in Europe. However, tourism is not assessed to have a significant contribution to the development of the economic environment in Dolj county, taking into account the low level of information on the natural and cultural tourist objectives at territorial level.

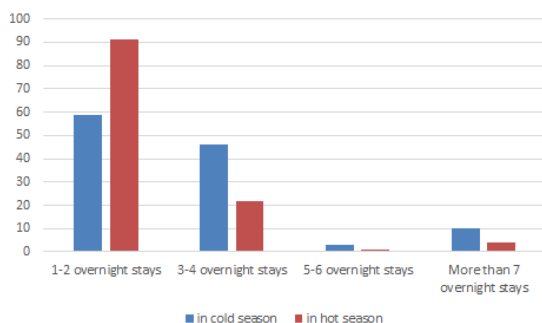
Olt County has also known a development of the tourism sector in recent years in relation to the accommodation possibilities and recreational activities (especially for the cruise and leisure tourism, in the Olt River basin as well as on the Danube valley, with its islands and beaches). And in the case of Olt county, a sub-development was indicated regarding the measures for promoting the tourism.

As far as Mehedinți County is concerned, it is seen as having a significant tourist development in recent years, especially as a result of the projects aimed at rehabilitating the heritage objectives, which were financed by non-reimbursable funds.

According to the information provided by the respondents, in the accommodation units managed, most of the tourist stays have a duration of 1-2 overnight stays, both in the hot season and in the cold season.

Thus, one may conclude that tourists choose destinations in the analysed counties mainly for spending the weekend. However, a higher number of stays that require 3-4 overnight stays may also be observed in the hot season. The

Figure no. 10 The average duration of a tourist stay at the level of responding units



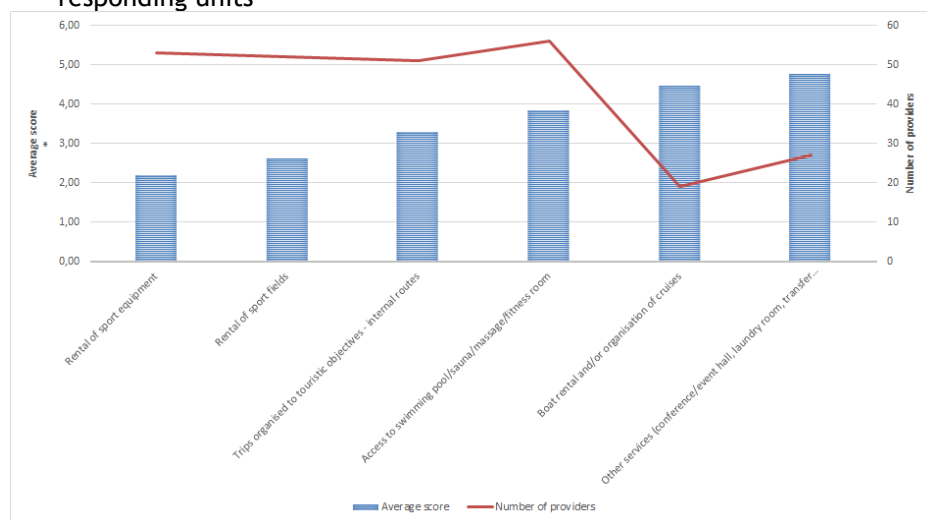
tourist stays of over 5 days are relatively rare, according to

Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2019

information provided by the respondents to the questionnaire.

In relation to the additional services provided at the level of the accommodation units, 42% of the respondents stated that they do not provide additional services and 58% of the respondents confirmed they provide such services.

Figure no. 1 The most requested additional services at the level of responding units



* 5 = additional service requested most; 1 = additional service requested least

Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2019

Based on the responses received from the units also providing additional accommodation services to the tourists accommodated, the most requested such services were identified such as renting boats and/or organisation of cruises, access to the swimming pool/sauna/fitness room or massage, as well as the organisation of conferences/events, organisation of recreational activities. It has also been observed that the rental of sports equipment and sports

fields are the least demanded services, although they are provided by many accommodation units.

More than 60% of respondents indicated that they provide informative material about the main tourist attractions in the area.

In Dolj County, the main tourist objectives promoted through these materials are: The Nicolae Romanescu Park, the museums, the historical centre, the botanical garden and the aquatic park in Craiova.

In Olt County, the main tourist objectives promoted through these materials are: Sucidava citadel, Clocociov Monastery, Museum of Romanați, the Memorial House of Nicolae Ceausescu, the Constantin Poroianu Park and the Municipal Theatre of Caracal.

In Mehedinți County, the main tourist objectives promoted through these materials are: Ponicova Cave, Veterani Cave, Ciucaru Mountain, the Face of Decebalus, Danube Kazans, the museums in Drobeta Turnu Severin.

One may also observe that some of the respondents also promote tourist objectives in the neighbouring counties or even cross-border trips.

However, it should also be taken into account that a significant number of respondents (31%) stated they do not provide such informative materials on tourist objectives and do not plan to use them in the future. The main reason indicated is the lack of such materials distributed by the managers of the touristic objectives in the area.

Regarding the territorial concentration of the accommodation structures:

- most of the respondents in Dolj county declared that the unit is located near the Nicolae Romanescu Park, the Historic Centre, the Botanical Garden or the Art Museum in Craiova.
- most of the respondents in Olt County declared that the unit is located near the various places of worship (mainly

monasteries), Memorial House of Nicolae Ceaușescu or the Museum of Romanați

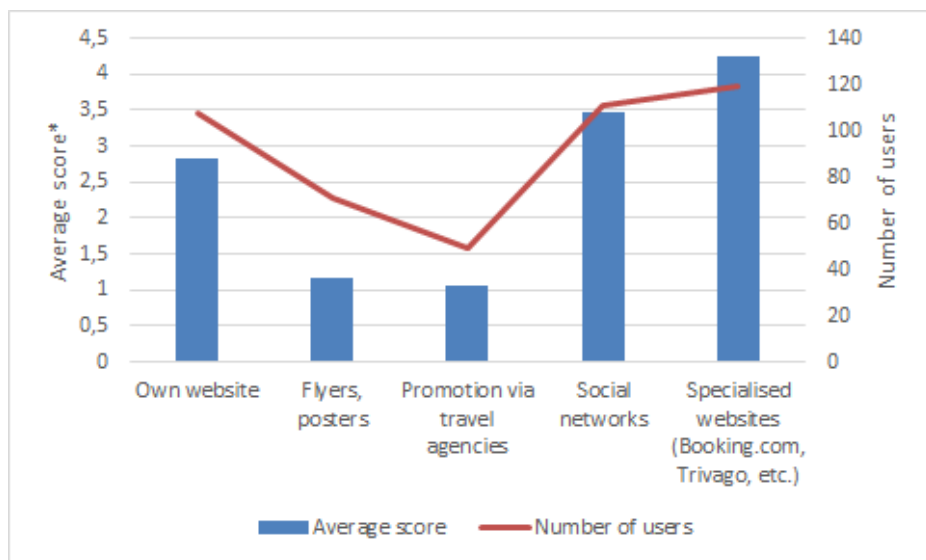
- most of the respondents in Mehedinți County declared that the unit is located near the face of Decebalus, Poncova and Veterani caves, Danube Kazans, Ciucaru Mountain, Mraconia Monastery or Severin Medieval Citadel

Through the comparative analysis of the answers on the informative materials provided to accommodated tourists and the tourist objectives in the proximity of the accommodation unit, one may observe that, in general, the responses coincide. However, with regard to the monasteries located near the accommodation units, one may deduce that promoting them through the informative materials is less developed than that of other tourist objectives in the area.

The collaboration between the travel agencies and accommodation structures is an element that can be approached and improved in the near future taking into account that only half of the respondents have confirmed the existence of a cooperation agreement with travel agents that allows the inclusion of the accommodation unit in a tourism package.

According to the information collected through the interviews, the collaboration between the managers of the cultural objectives and travel agencies had a significant positive impact on the number of visitors in recent years.

Figure no. 2 Means of promotion used by respondents

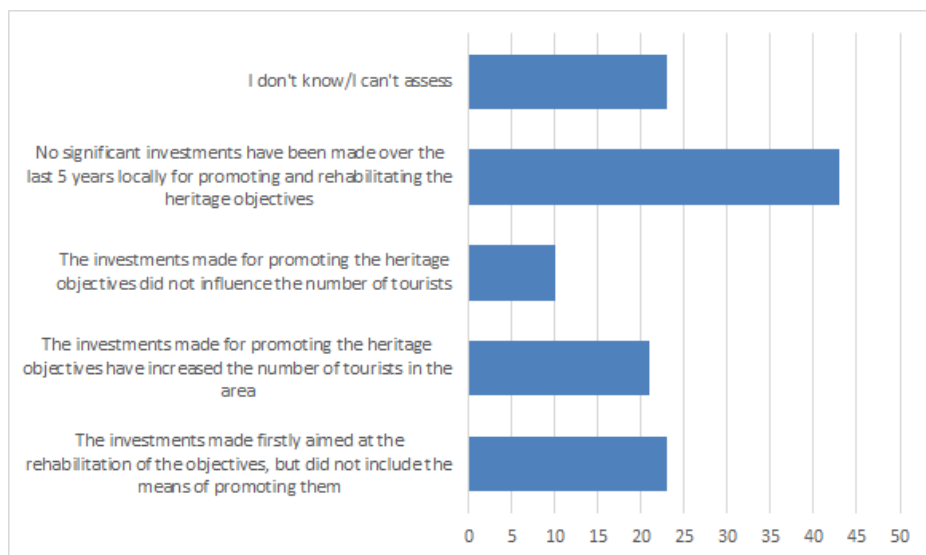


* 5 = the means of promotion used most; 1 = the means of promotion used least

Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2019

The main promoting channel used by respondents is the online environment, e.g. specialised websites (e.g. Booking, Trivago, etc.). Social networks are also an important means for promoting the accommodation unit. Most of the respondents stated they also have a website, but its utility is lower in relation to attracting tourists. The used means of promotion least useful and used is considered to be the publicity through travel agencies.

Figure no. 3 The results of local investments made locally over the last 5 years for promoting and rehabilitating the heritage objectives



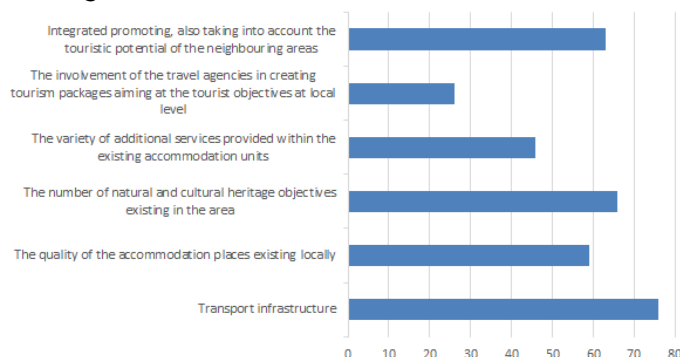
Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2019

Regarding the investments made locally over the last 5 years for promoting and rehabilitating the heritage objectives, more than 44% of the respondents believe that they were not significant and did not influence the number of visitors. Only 17% believe that the investments made have led to an increase in the number of tourists, while 19% consider that the investments made have only aimed at rehabilitating the objectives and not at promoting them.

According to the information collected through the interviews carried out, a number of joint projects and partnerships between public authorities and the private sector have been initiated in recent years in order to implement measures to promote the rehabilitated heritage objectives through the projects carried out. It should also be taken into account that the achievement of an investment requires a planning period of at least 1 year, followed by the actual implementation that can take 2-3 years and only afterwards the promoting measures may be launched, which can be organised for 1 year. The impact of promotional measures must be viewed from a

long-term perspective and is felt progressively at the level of the territory.

Figure no. 4 The main factors that can influence the degree of tourist attractiveness of an area



Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2019

Regarding the factors that influence the degree of tourist attractiveness of an area, the respondents delimited the main factors as being the existing transport infrastructure, the number of the

natural and cultural heritage elements of the area, as well as the measures applied for the integrated promotion of the area and of the neighbouring territories.

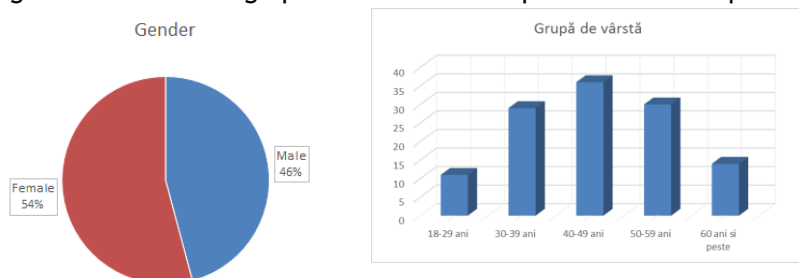
Last but not least, in order to improve the tourist attractiveness of the analysed areas, the respondents to the questionnaire indicated a number of recommendations such as:

- for Dolj County: investments in infrastructure, organisation of several cultural and sports events, the implementation of measures for the development of the local economic environment, the increase of the number of destinations connected by direct flights with the International Airport of Craiova
- for Olt County: the implementation of measures for the development of the local economic environment, the rehabilitation of the road infrastructure and of the buildings in

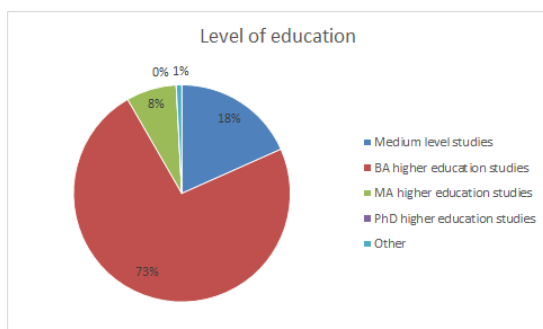
the old centre of Slatina, the intensification of the measures to promote the tourist objectives in the county

- for Mehedinți County: investments in transport, sewerage and drinking water infrastructure in rural areas, illumination of tourist objectives (e.g.: the Face of Decebalus), planning/marketing the tourist routes.

Figure no. 5 Demographic data on the respondents to the questionnaire



In terms of demographic data, most respondents were classified in the 40-49 age category, females, the last graduated level of education being undergraduate studies.



Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2019

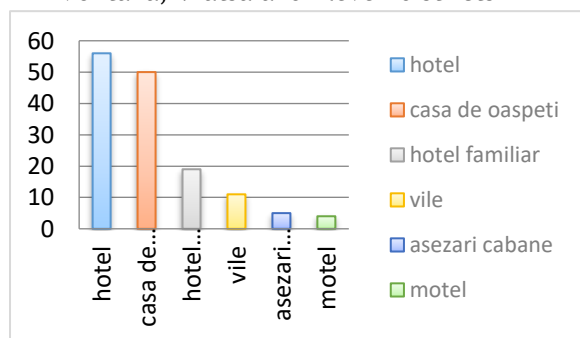
Of the total of 251 accommodation structures authorised in Dolj, Mehedinți, Olt counties, 120 sent responses to the questionnaire. The research carried out thus involved a representative sample of 48% of the total accommodation structures in the territory analysed.

III.8. Presentation of the Data Collected from the Field survey at the Level of Vidin, Montana, Vratsa, Pleven Districts (BG)

The field survey in Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven districts carried out under this study, covered a variety of types of accommodation units, such as structures with a low capacity of accommodation (4-5 beds), as well as structures with a large accommodation capacity (over 100 beds). As a result of the inventory of all accommodation units operating in the 4 districts, 145 accommodation units were identified, of which 134 were contacted for filling out the questionnaires.

52 questionnaires filled out were received from the contacted respondents, thus about 36% of the total accommodation structures located in Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven districts being involved in the field survey.

Figure no. 6 Typology of accommodation structures in the territory of Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven districts



Various types of accommodation units such as hotels, guesthouses, hostels, lodges, family hotels, motels are operational on the analysed territory. Their distribution by typologies is shown in the figure below.

Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2018

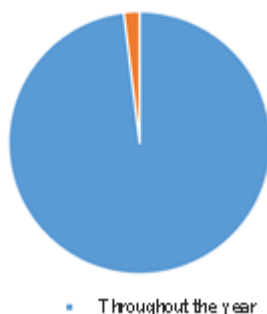
The relative weight according to the typology of accommodation structures is maintained also at the level of the population responding to the questionnaire. Considering this and the fact that 36% of the accommodation structures existing on the territory

covered by the survey have submitted answers to the questionnaire, the sample is considered to be representative and the data analysis thus provides single an actual and real situation.

In order to identify the internal/particular reasons to explain the annual low rate of occupancy at the level of accommodation structures, questions on the manner of work and quality of services provided to guests have been included therein.

Almost all accommodation places are available throughout the year, which can be considered as a positive factor that contributes positively to the occupancy rate of the accommodation places. Of the 52 owners or administrators of accommodation facilities surveyed, only 1 responded that the unit

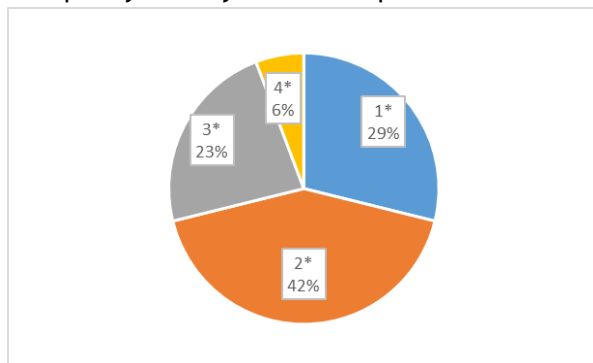
Figure no. 7 The operating period of the respondent accommodation structures



Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2018

is open to tourists only during the hot season (April 1st - October 30th).

Figure no. 8 Classification of respondent accommodation structures according to the quality/variety of services provided



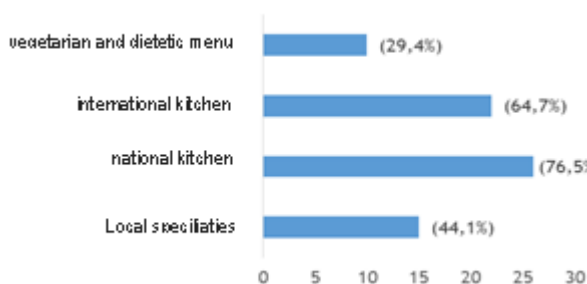
Nearly half of the accommodation structures are classified in the 2 star category. The next percentage share is assigned to the accommodation structures classified with 1 star. Only one respondent declared the accommodation unit to be in the 4-star

Source: Questionnaire data processing, category, no 2018

respondents existing to be classified in the 5 star category. This is a factor that has a bidirectional impact on the occupation of the accommodation structures. On the one hand, the lower price is more accessible to potential tourists, but on the other hand, the added value of the services provided is low.

By comparing the data from the answers to the questions "Do you provide restaurant type services for your customers?" And "What is the number of overnight stays in the last year?" it was observed that there is no direct correlation between them, meaning the provision of restaurant type services in the accommodation structures does not affect the number of tourist overnight stays. The positive aspect identified refers to the fact that, if such additional services are provided, the restaurants mainly offer traditional dishes.

Figure no. 9 Typology of restaurant type services provided by the responding accommodation structures



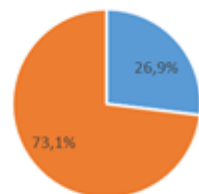
In the case of several accommodation structures, the restaurants near them also offer international cuisine. Mainly, in the accommodation units of lower accommodation capacity, traditional menus are offered.

Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2018

By analysing the relationship between providing ecological services and their demand from their tourists, it is observed that this is inversely proportional, which is in fact a negative element in the sense that the providers of accommodation services currently

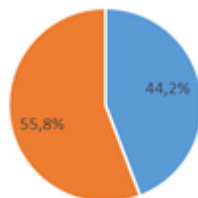
operating on the market do not have the facilities needed to meet the demand from potential tourists.

Figure no. 10 The offer of ecological services from the responding accommodation structures



Yes ■ No ■

Figure no. 11 Demand for ecological services from potential tourists on the analysed territory



Yes ■ No ■

Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2018

This factor also has a negative impact on the degree of occupying the tourist accommodation structures.

A positive element identified through the survey carried out is that almost all accommodation spaces in the area targeted by the study are built after 2000. Thus, one can assume that they offer modern and comfortable conditions for leisure and tourism, the managers of the accommodation structures trying to meet the requirements and expectations of modern tourism in this respect.

A negative aspect identified in the accommodation structures located in the districts of Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven participating in the field investigation is the lack of information from their managers regarding the quality standards in relation to the management of the unit. A direct consequence of this is the non-implementation of such standards in the current activity of the accommodation structures. This topic has been analysed based on the responses provided to the question: "What standards do you apply in the workplace?" Most responses received were classified in one of the following categories:

none, depending on the category of the object, high standards, we treat our customers politely, cleanliness and comfort. Only one respondent specified that they are currently implementing the ISO 22000 : 2005 standard, which they have obtained authorisation for.

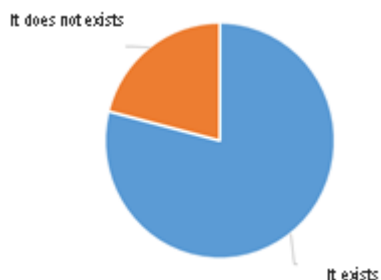
Approximately 60% of tourists travel to Vidin, Montana, Vratsa or Pleven districts to visit a landmark or a tourist objective. As a result, it is very important to create a complete picture on the geographical distribution of the most important natural, cultural and historical landmarks, respectively tourist objectives in the districts analysed. The results of this analysis can then be correlated subsequently with the ethnographic events and festivals organised and with relaxation, sports and entertainment opportunities existing in the area in order to create an integrated tourism product that would respond to the market demands.

From the questionnaires applied in the field survey, which were meant to collect quantitative and qualitative information, the following information was identified, which confirms the possibility and the opportunity to define integrated tourist packages at the level of Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven districts:

Figure no. 12 Respondents' opinion on the existence of cultural and natural heritage objectives of touristic potential, on the territory of the districts analysed



Figure no. 13 Respondents' opinion on the existence of tourist attractions of interest for potential tourists on the territory of the districts analysed



Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2018

Figure no. 14 Respondents' opinion on the existence of opportunities for relaxation, sport or entertainment on the territory of the districts analysed



Figure no. 15 Respondents' opinion on the existence of ethnographic events and festivals of interest for tourists on the territory of the districts analysed



Figure no. 16 The capacity of responding accommodation structures to provide facilities and room for disabled guests

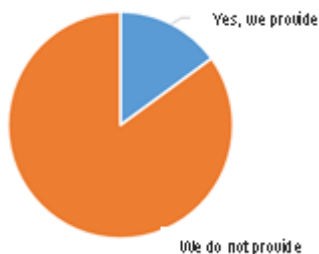


Figure no. 17 Respondents' degree of interest in relation to integrating the accommodation structure into a tourist package



Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2018

IV. Comparative RO-BG Study Analysis

A common element identified at the level of the two territories analysed is the existence of a varied and diversified natural and cultural heritage, but it is not currently exploited in a sustainable manner and at maximum potential. Both in the counties of Romania and in the districts of Bulgaria tourism does not provide an important contribution to the regional economy, but the degree of awareness of the public authorities about its potential is increasing, a number of important measures and actions being adopted in recent years, in the sense of operating some cooperation networks that will lead to increasing the touristic visibility of the natural and cultural heritage objectives.

In both territories analysed, recent years have been marked by significant investments made to rehabilitate several cultural heritage objectives through the non-reimbursable funds received from the European Union through various funding programs managed at national level. As it resulted from the field research on the objectives rehabilitated in recent years, they are currently undergoing the promotion stage in order to increase the touristic visibility and to reintegrate them into the local tourist circuits. It should be taken into account that this process is a lasting one, the effects of which can be felt in the medium and long term so one may assume that in the coming years the number of visitors to these objectives will increase and, consequently, also the number of tourists at local level.

The Danube River is a common element in all the counties and districts analysed, but only Mehedinți County seems to optimally exploit the development opportunities based on the touristic activities that can be organised around this natural element. Recreational, cruise or sports tourism can be easily developed at the level of localities that have direct access to the Danube River, the Dubova and Eșelnița townships in Mehedinți County enjoying a

spectacular development in recent years as a result of exploiting this advantage.

In terms of the natural heritage, also taking into account landscape formed, in Dolj and Olt counties, the pastures, forests and lakes are the main natural objectives. In Mehedinți county and Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven districts, the natural heritage includes a variety of caves and karstic formations that may represent points of interest for potential tourists. Both the counties in Romania and the districts in Bulgaria include within their territory a multitude of protected natural areas registered in the Natura 2000 network.

In relation to the cultural heritage, important vestiges of the Roman and Bronze Age were found on the territory of all the territories analysed. The Olt and Mehedinți counties (in Romania) and Vidin and Pleven districts (in Bulgaria) currently have the highest degree of popularity in terms of visitors of archaeological sites existing on their territory. At the level of all the territories analysed, there is a significant number of museums and memorial houses representing points of touristic interest. The culas represent a distinct element in the counties of Romania, which are estates or mansions of the Romanian boyars from the 17th - 19th centuries with particular architectural elements and details of that period. On all the territories analysed, there are historical monastic places declared as cultural monuments of national importance, which are or can become landmarks for monastic tourism in the area.

At the level of the territory analysed, there are no monuments registered on the UNESCO tangible cultural heritage list. The territories are however registered on the UNESCO intangible heritage list in terms of national customs practiced, including at local level, and Olt County is individually nominated on this list with the custom of Călușul.

In relation to the cultural events organised, it was observed that in Dolj county (Romania) and Vidin district (Bulgaria), there are organised festivals and cultural events that are most famous from the point of view of the number of visitors and visibility nationally and internationally.

By analysing the number of overnight stays at the level of the territories analysed, it has been observed that in recent years the number of overnight stays in the tourist accommodation structures has increased in all Romanian counties, the number even doubling over 5 years in Mehedinți Count. At the level of the Bulgarian districts, an increase in the number of overnight stays was recorded only in the Montana and Vratsa districts, but the increase was not significant. It is generally observed that the number of overnight stays recorded in the Romanian counties is higher than that recorded at the level of Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven districts. This can be explained also based on the number of accommodation structures existing at the level of the two territories: 251 in Dolj, Mehedinți, Olt counties and 145 in Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven districts.

By analysing the data collected through the field research, it was observed that in the Bulgarian districts most of the accommodation structures for tourist reception are hotels and classify into the 2 star category, while at the level of Romanian counties, most of the structures are guesthouses classified into the 3 star category.

By analysing in an integrated manner all the information collected through the researches carried out at the level of the territories targeted by studies, it was possible to perform a SWOT analysis, namely the delimitation of the main strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to the tourism potential in Dolj, Mehedinți, Olt counties, respectively the districts of Vidin, Montana and Vratsa. This is presented below.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p><u>Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți Counties</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an international airport operates in the area (in Craiova, Dolj county) - the number of accommodation structures and the accommodation capacity increased between 2013 and 2018 in all counties - the number of overnight stays doubled over 5 years in Mehedinți County, and Dolj and Olt counties recorded increases by approximately 40% - Olt County is registered on UNESCO intangible heritage list for the custom of Călușul - in Mehedinți County there are two biosphere reserves (Domogled-Cerna Valley Reserve; Iron Gates Reserve) - on the territory of the 3 counties there are approximately 2,000 cultural heritage objectives of historical importance, of which 10% are of national importance - In the three counties there is a large number of archaeological sites and ruins dating back to the Roman and Bronze Age - Most of the accommodation units provide guests with information materials about the tourist 	<p><u>Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți Counties</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The (road and rail) transport infrastructure is not modernised or is insufficiently developed - the number of accommodation structures and travel agencies on the territory of the 3 counties is small (only 2% of the total existing at national level) - the average duration of the touristic stays remained constant (Olt) or low (Dolj, Mehedinți) between 2013 and 2018 and is generally low (1-2 days) - over 40% of the accommodation structures involved in the field research stated that they do not provide additional services - high number of accommodation units that do not cooperate with travel agencies and are not thus integrated into any tourist package <p><u>Vidin, Montana, Vratsa, Pleven</u></p>

<p>objectives in the area <u>Vidin, Montana, Vratsa, Pleven</u> <u>Districts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a high number of natural and cultural heritage objectives of national and local importance existing on the territory of the 4 districts - Most of the tourist reception structures have a small number of accommodation places and can create a sense of family comfort for the tourists accommodated there - there are various additional tourist services provided by the accommodation units or by other units in their vicinity - the accommodation structures are functional throughout the year - Most of the accommodation structures have been built relatively recently and thus provide modern facilities to the accommodated tourists - Around the main tourist objectives there is a sufficient number of accommodation units to cover the tourist demand - tourists have easy and online access for booking the accommodation places - there is a number of ecotourist 	<p><u>Districts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - half of the tourist reception structures do not provide ecological services - Most reception structures do not provide facilities and services for disabled people - the lack of quality standards for the management and for the services provided - in the Pleven district, most of the accommodation units operate in Pleven - outside the city there operates a very small number of tourist reception structures - between 2012 and 2017, the number of overnight stays remained relatively constant (Montana, Vratsa) or has registered decreases (Vidin, Pleven)
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routes built, most of which are signalled with clear markings and have an appropriate infrastructure	
Opportunities	Threats
<p>The elaboration and implementation of projects funded by non-reimbursable funds aimed to rehabilitate and promote the heritage objectives</p> <p>Partnerships between the public authorities and actors from the private environment in order to promote the touristic image of the territory and to create cooperation networks</p> <p>The activity of tourism agencies to promote the local territory and to create thematic touristic circuits.</p> <p>Integrated touristic promotion actions at inter-county/interdistrict or cross-border level</p> <p>Actions to promote the area in tourism fairs organised at national or international level.</p> <p>The implementation of county/regional tourism development strategies</p> <p>The implementation of strategies for the digitisation of cultural and natural heritage objectives</p>	<p>High degree of complexity of the documentation necessary to elaborate and implement the projects with non-reimbursable financing for the rehabilitation of heritage objectives</p> <p>Higher visibility and popularity among tourists for the neighbouring territories</p> <p>The tourism sector is not perceived by the local public authorities as a potential epicentre for the economic development of the analysed territories</p> <p>The emigration of the labour force specialised in the field of hospitality services</p>

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Dolj, Olt, Mehedinți counties and Vidin, Montana, Vratsa and Pleven districts have a rich natural and cultural heritage, recognised at national and international level.

The analysed territory is served by many tourist reception structures, however tourism does not provide a significant contribution to the local economy for any of the counties and districts analysed. One of the reasons that determines this situation is the average duration of the tourist stays in the area, which is a small one. In recent years however, a number of local investments have been made locally in order to rehabilitate the heritage objectives and re-introduce them into the tourist circuit. At the same time, it is observed that the local public institutions are starting to make efforts to increase the degree of cooperation with the private environment in order to increase the visibility of the region.

Among the tourism types practiced at the level of the analysed territory, ecotourism and rural tourism are real development perspectives, this being acknowledged at the level of accommodation structures that start to adapt their service portfolio to meet the demand existing on the market.

From the perspective of the recommendations, the main elements that can have a sustainable and durable positive impact on the sustainable and durable use of the natural and cultural heritage in the area, they mainly aim at implementing measures to increase the tourist visibility of the objectives rehabilitated in recent years and thus reintroduced into the touristic circuit, as well as the continuation of the investments at local level in order to improve the basic and transport infrastructure.

As it results from the analysis included in this study, by implementing some creative initiatives and by promoting the existing cultural and natural heritage in an integrated manner, tourism could become one of the main pillars of the local and regional economy.

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