



Regional SWOT analysis for THETRIS project

PP4: Regional Development Agency of the Prešov Self-Governing region

INTRODUCTION TO PREŠOV REGION:

Prešov Region is located in the northeastern part of the Slovak Republic. Its northern boundary is a long state border with Poland. In the East, region adjacent to the Ukrainian Republic. Adjacent on the southern side there is the Košice Region, while adjacent to the west is Žilina and Banská Bystrica region. It is conveniently located, connected to two states and three counties, which may lead to increase in visits by foreign visitors and by domestic visitors from other regions respectively.

Prešov region is located in the northern temperate zone. This zone is characterized by changing of four seasons. This is a downside, but the natural potential of the region offers a possibility of recreational use both in summer and winter.

Natural environment with high forest cover, water areas and a large number of historical treasures creates diverse possibilities for recreation and relaxation by tourists. Areas like High Tatra mountains national park, national park Pieniny, Domaša water basin, historic city centers of Prešov, Levoča, Kežmarok, Bardejov are filled with important cultural monuments, sacred objects and others.

The Prešov region lies on the main European watershed. There are many picturesque lakes,

created by glacial activity in the High Tatras. The other major tourist centers are lakes Popradské pleso and Štrbské pleso. Rafting on a traditional barge on a river Dunajec turns into a tourist attraction in summer. Most attractive tourist season is summer, especially for a variety of water sports on the Domaša water basin.

The region has a significant wealth of mineral and thermal springs. Their occurrence is linked to deep fractures in the earth's crust (Spa Bardejov, Vyšné Ružbachy, Cigeľka). The main advantage is that their potential is available throughout the year.

There are many national parks in Prešov region. The most valuable are the national parks - Tatra National Park, National Park Pieniny and National Park Poloniny. Tatras attract climbers and skiers in the winter, but also ordinary tourists. Its clean air is used to treat patients for respiratory diseases, for which a dense network of sanatoria and spa facilities were built. The area offers a wide range of walking and hiking in the winter, like Spisska Magura, Pieniny and Lubovnianske range. The most famous winter sports centers, apart from the High Tatras, are: Drienica - Lysa, Lipovce, Svidník, Stropkov and many others.

There are valuable cultural and historical monuments located in the urban conservation area Podolíneec, in the center of the Old Zamagurie, Lubovňa the Red Monastery. The area is also known for its picturesque wooden churches and wooden architecture.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP:



Strengths:

Fairly high amount of 15% of residents of Prešov region has a university degree, 66% has finished high school, while the rest was educated in elementary school. Most of the poorly educated population is of Roma ethnic.

There are two universities in Prešov, Prešov University and University of international businesses. Universities are focusing on social science such as pedagogy, philosophy and psychology, but also include Management as natural science.

Real-estate prices are rising after addition of new tax for real-estate gain, in addition to small steps forward economy takes, trying to restore after global economic crisis.

Weaknesses:

Biggest problem in the socio-economic aspect in Prešov region is a very high unemployment rate. For almost 66 000 unemployed residents there are only 900 jobs available. This is a long lasting problem in Prešov region, mostly in north eastern parts. Due to economic crisis, situation is changing for the worse.

As a result of this falling trend, local residents move to bigger cities in search for jobs. Mostly moving to western parts of Slovakia, where there are more opportunities for people to get interesting jobs, because most of the industry in Slovakia is situated there. Or to city of Košice, which is close by and is second biggest city in Slovakia. In the last decade the outflow of Prešov region residents grew by 30 %. Never the less, natural increase of population is in positive digits as the resulting number is + 2430 residents because of the increasing birth rate.

Opportunities:

City of Košice became European capital of culture, which created an opportunity for increased funding of culture and history. University of Prešov concluded a memorandum with non-profit organization Košice – European capital of culture, where they agreed on a close cooperation on the project. This created an opportunity for Prešov to use some portion of funds for cultural activities. The main goal of the memorandum is to increase awareness of cultural heritage, create events that connect people to their cultural heritage and educate local residents.

Slovak government gives opportunity to SMEs with special programs for SMEs on the market with a financial support up to maximum of 100 000 € in three consecutive years. There are 14 programs in total, each specializing in a different category of industry.

Threats:

Surely the biggest threat is the insufficient funding from public funds. Economic crisis negatively influenced the amount of financial resources of local and state government and self-administration. Finances are being allocated for more pressing matters and necessary investments. Small towns and villages in the region don't have the capacity to obtain enough financial resources to fund expensive projects themselves, while state donations and funding is scarce. This means that regional government and self-administrating bodies don't invest in cultural heritage until it's absolutely necessary. Cultural heritage itself is being reconstructed, mainly thanks to funds from European Union, but services provided in the area are mostly behind the western standards, with exceptions.

New legislative created by the government and then ratified in law in October 2012 was aimed to help raise employment in the state, but had the opposite outcome. New form of

employment contract, income tax obligations for student workers, decreasing the amount of remuneration that a person can earn without having the obligation to pay taxes and many other changes made employers dismiss many employees and this trend is expected to last for few more months.

Investment flow in Prešov region is very low. Most of the industry in Slovakia is situated in western parts of the country and this trend is continuing until today. In Prešov region, 60% of population works in industry, 20 % in agriculture and rest is divided in other business areas. Inflow of capital to tourism is negligible.

ROUTES NAD LOCATION:



Strengths:

The existence of tourist information centers in all major cities in Prešov region helps foreign as well as domestic visitors in coordinating their visits. Information centers in cities Bardejov, Spišské podhradie, Levoča and Svidník, which are the closest cities to targeted temples, help increase awareness of existing cultural heritage in their neighborhood. They offer assistance in finding accommodation, thereby extending the stay of visitors. Also providing services like guided tours, the sale of additional products, such as maps of the city and its environs, brochures with the current cultural programs, and various other promotional materials informing about the possibilities of sport and culture in the region.

Transport accessibility of the region is an essential factor in the development of international tourism. Foreign visitors accounted for 32.6% of total visitors in 2010. Visitors had the largest representation from Czech Republic and Poland.

Existence of road routes of international importance, linking the Czech-Slovak border with Slovakia-Ukraine border E50 Drietoma-Žilina-Košice-Prešov-border SR-UA- Uzhgorod

increases share of Czech visitors to the region. Another important road is the road 371 linking Prešov - Svidník - Vyšný Komárnik and SR / PL border. The most important route is the road D1 motorway, which connects the region with the capital of Slovakia. The road is not yet finished. A road tunnel beneath Branisko mountain range which separates Levoča from Prešov was built to improve transport accessibility.

An important factor for the development of tourism in the region is sufficient accommodation facilities. Prešov region provided 551 accommodation facilities to tourists, of which 105 were hotels, 123 pensions, 140 other accommodation facilities, 50 dormitories and 124 tourist accommodation in private resorts in 2011. Visitors are provided with 10,190 rooms, 27,637 beds. Last year in Prešov region 618 470 guests were housed accommodation facilities, which represents 17.3% of the total number of visitors in SR. There are three categories of accommodation facilities in Spišské podhradie. Hotels, motels and hostels. There are many categories of accommodation in Bardejov. Mostly hotels and hostels in three star category are present in Levoča city. In Svidiník you can find mostly motels and hostels. Downside is that the services provided are mostly not of western quality standards.

Cultural and historical monuments are relatively well accessible for elderly and handicapped people. They are usually located in the main square, or near constructed asphalt driveway.

Cultural and historical monuments are part of the world cultural heritage, ensuring their protection and accessibility. They are subject of the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage since 1993. Levoča, Spišský castle and surrounding monuments and old town of Bardejov were included in this convention, each being part of Prešov region.

Weaknesses:

Poorly developed infrastructure in the region - low proportional representation of higher-class roads, while the existence of a particular third class, poor quality roads. Lack of link between Poland and Hungary through Prešov region. Poor bus and train links except Bardejov, which is located on the international route. Bodružal and Tročany are difficult to reach because of the small population of these villages, which results in irregular bus services. Spišské podhradie is accessible only by bus, train service was canceled recently.

Poprad-Tatry airport is not of international importance. It has very few direct links to a few places, which worsens the county accessibility, especially for foreign visitors. Kosice Airport is of international importance, but the drawback is its distance from the cultural heritage of Prešov.

Big problem is seasonal tourism and associated irregular visits to the region.

Opportunities:

Recent emergence of new bicycle lanes in other cities of Prešov region helps develop ecotourism.

There are many pilgrimage sites in Prešov region. It has a high potential for developing pilgrim tourism throughout the year.

Diverse cultural and natural heritage in the area establishes a comprehensive offer for the visitor. Prešov region has potential to become highly visited tourist region, which will help preserve cultural heritage while increasing traffic of tourist flow.

Profit from tourism is achievable if we use environmental, historical and cultural assets of the region.

Threats:

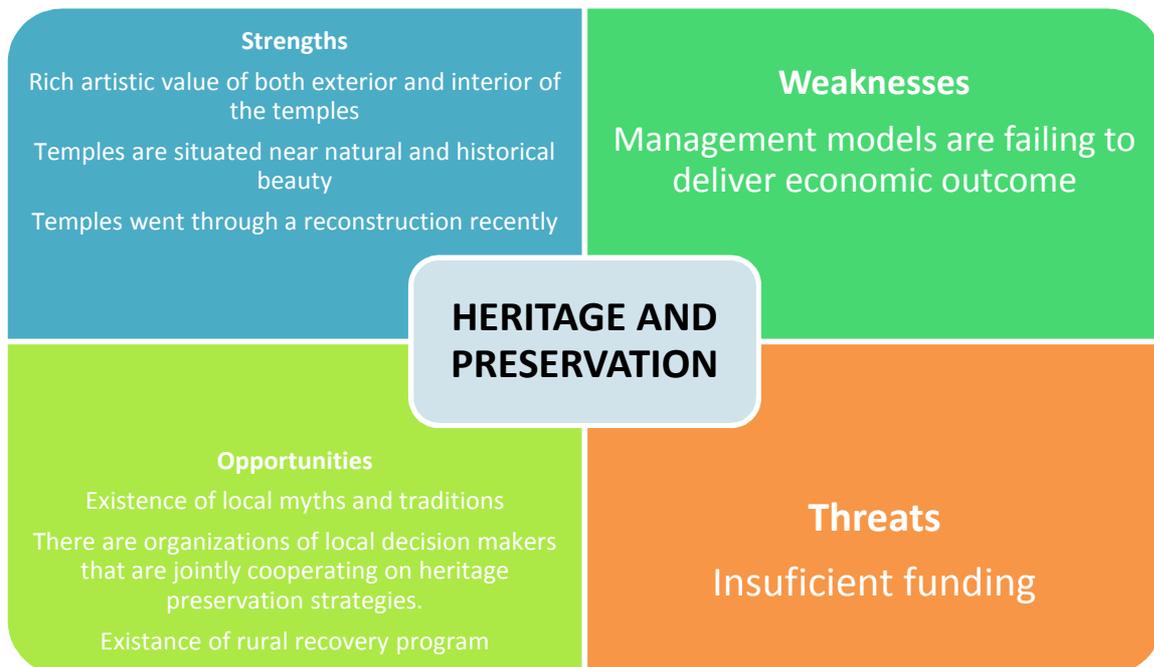
Low inflow of tourists to the region and prevailing centralization of the administration of European funds.

The D1 motorway which connects the east and west of Slovakia is under construction. According to current information, it is to be completed in 2019, but this date was several times delayed during construction.

Underestimation of the importance of tourism as a dynamic business sector.

Weather threatens demand for tourism, because it cannot be influenced. Natural disasters such as floods or low number of sunny days affect demand in the summer.

HERITAGE AND PRESERVATION:



Strengths:

Temples targeted for this project are all included in UNESCO, which confirmed their uniqueness. Churches in Spišské podhradie, Levoča, Bardejov are built in Roman-Gothic style. Spišská Kapitula in Spišské podhradie, Cathedral of St. Martin is also a part of Spiš Jeruzalem, which is a 1:1 copy of Jerusalem's last path of Jesus Christ. The temple was built in the years 1245-1273.

Temple of St. James in Levoča, built in 13th -15th century is the second biggest cathedral in Slovakia. Its rich interior is dominated by the biggest winged late Gothic altar in the world (18.62 m height, width 6 m) created by master craftsman Pavol.

Basilica minor of St. Egidius in Bardejov also houses awesome interior decorations by master craftsman Pavol. The level of artistic perfection of both interior and exterior of the temple is very high. Temple was built in late Gothic style in 15th century

Temples in Tročany and Bodružal are both built entirely out of wood and are used for Greek-catholic liturgies until this day. They both contain rare iconography. In temple in Bodružal you can find one of the most valuable mural paintings in eastern Europe.

Temples in Bardejov, Levoča are situated in city centers of small towns, both of which are included in UNESCO. They are rimmed by old townspeople houses and ramparts. Cities themselves are in beautiful scenery of hills, meadows and forests. Spišské podhradie is situated right below the biggest castle in central Europe called Spišský hrad (Spiš castle).

Temples in Bodružal and Tročany are near these small villages in beautiful scenery of Slovak country side.

All the temples targeted for the means of this project went through a complex renovation and restoration or are undergoing one.

Weaknesses:

Temples are used for liturgical ceremonies and as a tourist attraction, which meant creation of management models. These models however don't give the results that were expected. Temples are mostly visited by believers and local residents. Tourists from other regions visit the monuments too, but in fewer numbers than the capacity and region offers.

Opportunities:

Local traditions are still in the minds of the local residents, mostly because of traditional markets that are held annually. Traditional crafts, food and drinks are being sold and prepared on the spot, legends are being presented by actors etc. This raises the chances for cultural heritage to not be forgotten.

Local decision makers are assembled in a committee where they are preparing marketing and preservation strategies, working on project applications, collecting and exchanging good practices etc. which creates an opportunity for good know-how distribution and creation of better management models.

Threats:

Biggest threat is again, insufficient funding. Temples themselves are not such strong economic asset as to provide enough financial resources to fund necessary needs. This is also due to ineffective management methods. Traditions are being passed mostly in communities

and on traditional local markets partially financed by towns self-governing administrative, partially by residents attending the market as merchants selling traditional products. This way of heritage preservation is fairly inexpensive because of the division of the expenses between the merchants and local government.

LOCAL IDENTITY AND COMMITMENT:



Strengths:

Local decision makers cooperate with any organization that is trying to increase the value of historical heritage in the eyes of residents, to preserve the cultural heritage and traditions in the region. They participate in projects, actively pursue fund raising, acquiring financial resources for renovations, reconstructions, restorations of local monuments and historical buildings.

Non-profit organizations, public associations and volunteers, mostly in form of pilgrims are also of great help. There is a joint urge in public opinion, which drives the creation of such associations and their activities. In small town of Spišské podhradie, there are more than five of such public associations. Terra incognita, organization of Košice municipality region, also works on the project involving Spišská Kapitula and Spišský Jeruzalem.

Local residents in Prešov region in general feel deeply connected to their cultural and historical heritage. Every town and/or village has its own legends, myths, traditions, ways to cook or craft unique products. These are being presented on social events such as traditional

markets organized by local self-governing administrative or local government involving singing, dancing, cooking, crafts etc.

Weaknesses:

Activities carried out by public associations etc. halted after finalization of projects.

Opportunities:

Religious pilgrimage routes in Prešov region have a long tradition. One of the oldest pilgrimage routes is situated in Levoča, Mariánska Hora (Marián Hill). In 1247 local citizens built a chapel in gratitude for saving the town from foreign aggression. John Paul II. visited Mariánska hora in 1984. Annual march to chapel became a national religious tradition. Religious pilgrims are a big part of local community, which raises the value of religious monuments and traditions for the community. 70% of the population is religious.

Traditional local markets held annually raise awareness of local traditions and cultural heritage. Markets are visited by residents from all around the region for their quality products made with traditional methods. Demand after traditional products, traditional methods of cooking and crafting is rising continuously.

Threat:

Bad economic situation and high unemployment rate led to increase in outflow of residents to other counties/countries. Outflow of young residents may lead to weakening of bond between local residents and their cultural heritage. There are only dozens of residents in Tročany, which will lead to slow extinction of culture and traditions of this small community.

Volunteers, public associations, non-profit organizations are all trying to gain financial resources from all the possible sources, including public collections. Bad economic situation makes it difficult to raise financial resources from any source. Public funds are used for necessary expenses like infrastructure repairs etc. Public collections themselves in such a small region don't have the capacity to fund big projects that cultural heritage demands.



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