

## **BALKANS – SAFE AND SECURE DESTINATION FOR TOURISM. ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION**

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### **Abstract**

*Purpose* – The conceptualization of the future is connected, as a rule, with a critical reflection on the present. Such consideration is particularly relevant to the Balkan region as a consequence of its inherent geographical realities and historical circumstances, which predetermined what was happening in this region of Europe. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the countries located on the peninsula underwent changes and joined different alliances and unions, under the complicated regional and international relations. Such peculiarities provoked this study with a focus on the manifestation of global problems and their regional dimensions in the Balkans, through the security and safety issues explored in the context of tourism. Obviously, in the future, their importance will be even greater, having a significant socio-economic impact, including the tourism industry, where no tourist destination can be fully protected from various situations of threat (well seen during the Covid pandemic). Respecting the new realities, the study explores the preparedness of the tourism industry in the Balkans countries for events of natural and social nature.

*Design* – The study of the Balkan countries as tourist destinations is analytical in nature and with a design that ensures that the studied data have the necessary reliability and allow a comprehensive coverage of the research problem.

*Methodology* – Methodologically, the research is based on a literature review on the topic and on a survey of overview information from international databases. The performed situational and comparative analysis uses for source information from the INFORM Index from the Joint Research Center of the EU Commission in fact outlines the trends in the development of tourist destinations on country level on the Balkans, influenced by natural and social threats.

*Approach* – The conceptual framework is still at an early stage of development and the current study could be useful for reevaluating the threats that are being observed and for supporting future research on the topic. The chosen approach to the study area - the Balkan Peninsula is consistent with its specifics and territorial features and reveals the picture of growing pressure under the stress of natural and social threats - war, disease, terrorism, natural phenomena, accompanied by financial and geopolitical tensions. high level of security.

*Findings* – The obtained results have their significance for outlining the trends for the tourist destinations in the Balkans. Above all, its scientific usefulness is revealed in the analysis of the exposure of the Balkan countries as tourist destinations of natural and social threats, accompanied by trends for each of them, drawn as main conclusions.

*Originality of the research* – The scientific and theoretical novelty of the research consists in the practical guidelines, which are outlined in order to improve the preparedness of the tourism industry in the Balkans countries for events of natural and social nature.

**Keywords** Tourism, Balkans, Safety, Security, Effects, Trends

## INTRODUCTION

The formation of the idea of the future is connected, as a rule, with the critical thinking of the present. It's dissatisfaction with the present that gives rise to fears for the future, which, riveted by their common significance, sometimes take on the grotesque dimensions of predictions of impending doom, conspiracy scenarios or all sorts of theories for a better future. Such considerations are particularly prevalent in the Balkan region. And this is so, mostly because of the geographical circumstances and historical circumstances that predetermined what was happening in this region of Europe.

Located in the southeastern part of Europe, the Balkan Peninsula is the focal point of the naturally formed connection between the European continent and the continents of Asia and Africa (Physical Geography of the Balkan Peninsula, 2013).

The Balkans and the peoples(nations) who inhabited them in time have a significant presence and contribution to the history, culture, economy and politics of Europe in particular, and to human civilization in general (Tile of Gradeshnitsa - the most ancient letter?, 2019). As Manchev (2001) notes, "the political map of the Balkans has always been extremely colorful." Today, the countries of Bulgaria, Greece, Northern Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, partly Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia are located on the Balkan Peninsula. In part, its geographical scope includes Northern Dobruja, territorially connected to Romania, Eastern Thrace in Turkey and the region of Trieste in Italy. All of them have both natural wealth and significant cultural heritage. Being a kind of "center", the Balkans are always present in European and world civilization, radiating "certain religious and socio-political value models, transforming into criteria for differentiation and a kind of norm" (Nikolova, 2016). Greece, as the heir of Ancient Greece and Bulgaria, as the heir of the rich culture of the Thracians and Proto-Bulgarians, along with Serbia, North Macedonia and Romania, are also the heirs of a highly developed culture known as the Danube civilization. The richness of natural resources, the countries of the Balkans protect in protected areas of different categories such as Olympus, Parnassus, Pindus, Vikos-Aoos, Samaria and others. in Greece; Rila, Pirin, Vitosha (the first park in Bulgaria and on the Balkan Peninsula (1934)), Strandzha, etc. in Bulgaria; Plitvice Lakes, Brioni and Velebit in Croatia; Postojna Pit and Škocjan in Slovenia; Mavrovo in North Macedonia, Kapaonik, Frushka and the Devil's Town in Serbia; Durmitor and Shodren Lake Montenegro. In its diversity, natural and cultural richness in the Balkans, it actually makes them an attractive destination for tourism, which has established itself both as a regional center and internationally.

Unfortunately, the territory of the Balkans, due to its crossroads and potential, has always been of economic and political interest. In the early 1990s, the countries on the peninsula underwent changes, waged wars, and joined alliances and alliances. For this reason, looking from the wave of "modernity" to the future, it is not contrasting patterns that are found, but bizarrely distorted images. They cast doubt on the possibilities for a radical change in the existing socio-economic and political structures. Also, for the moral renewal of the cultural values that accompany the adaptation of the social and individual life of the people to the changes taking place in the world, and in particular in the Balkans. Therefore, the focus should be on global issues and their regional dimensions that affect the interests of nations. These issues include: establishing lasting peace and eliminating

outbreaks of international tension, protecting the environment and preventing natural disasters and dangerous diseases, the rational use of natural resources and the provision of food and energy needs, the development of the physical and spiritual forces of the population. All of them are important not only for the socio-economic and cultural development of individual countries, but also for the progress of human civilization in general. It is obvious that in the long run global changes will become even more important, having a significant impact on all aspects of people's lives. Thus, together, they have inevitable projections on the tourism industry, where no tourist destination can be fully protected from various situations of threat.

In this connection is set the relevance of the study. The fact is that the tourism industry needs strategies and guidelines to help destinations prepare for natural and social events that threaten it. The object of research in the present study are the natural and social threats to tourism in the countries of the Balkan Peninsula as tourist destinations. The subject of the research are the development trends in relation to them, influenced by natural and social threats. In general, answers are sought to the questions - can and to what extent threats can be managed, with what means and in what course.

## **1. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND BASIC CONCEPTS**

For the purposes of the research, studied and analyzed are numerous scientific papers by Bulgarian and foreign authors in a long-time range, regulations of international and national rank, specialized international sources and publications in the field of tourism, statistics of the World Economic Forum, European Union and the World Tourism Organization, as well as authorial research on the subject in recent years.

To clarify the framework of the research, it is assumed that the explanation of the conceptual apparatus that is being worked with is a prerequisite for its logical completion. In this regard, the destination is defined as "a physical space with or without administrative and / or analytical boundaries in which a visitor can spend an overnight." (World Tourism Organization, 2019) or also as a "cluster (co-location) of products and services, and of activities and experiences along the tourism value chain" and as "intangible" space "with its image and identity which may influence its market competitiveness". A single recognizable destination can have different territorial dimensions. Among the first definitions of a destination is that of Geogulas (1970), who states that tourism as an industry takes place in "destination or other target areas" - areas with different natural and / or artificial characteristics that attract non-local visitors. or tourists) for [carrying out [various] activities.". The term gained wide popularity thanks to Leper in the 1980s (Stankova, 2009).

In the specifics of the present study, the tourist destination is considered as the place that determines the spatial tourist economic and non-economic attitude in tourism. It carries out the production, supply and sale of tourist goods and services. It is also a scene of manifestation of the phenomenon of disaster as a threat and the resulting crisis. The terms crisis and disaster are often used interchangeably in the specialized literature as well as in everyday life in popular publications. In the context of the topic, it is important to distinguish between them so that the focus of the current study is more precisely defined.

One of the definitions of disaster to be mentioned is that of Carter in 1991 (Carter W. (ed.), 1991). According to him, the disaster is “an event, naturally or artificially provoked, suddenly or gradually developing, which has an impact with such severity that the affected community must respond through emergency measures.” According to Selbst (1978), the nature of the crisis is explained as “any action or inaction that hinders the development of (organizational) functions, acceptable approaches to achieving the goals of the organization or its viability or evaluation ...” (Selbst, 1978). According to the UNWTO, the crisis is an unexpected event that reflects the trust that travelers have in the destination and hinders its normal development and functioning (Nepal Tourism Board). In this line, many more definitions can be given, because as noted by Ritchie, Dorrell, Miller, & Miller (2004), over the years many researchers have tried to formulate a definition of a crisis in order to support its understanding as a phenomenon.

“... More than any other economic activity, the success or failure of a tourism destination depends on being able to provide a safe and secure environment for visitors” (UNWTO, (1996)). As can be seen from the review of the literature on the issue of safety and security in tourism, the question concerns above all the perception of tourists regarding how confidently they might overcome uncertainties (Quintal, Lee & Soutar, 2010). While, at the same time, as noted by Jiang, Ritchie and Benckendorff (2017), the focus of tourism security studies emphasizes on the nature of threats and the development of managerial approaches to their prevention, containment and strategic management.

Undoubtedly, tourist destinations are at risk of natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, droughts, etc.) due to their geographical location, as well as social ones (terrorist attacks, hostilities or social tensions). Therefore, systematizing the information about them is important. There is also guidance on developing strategies to mitigate threats and rehabilitate tourist destinations after disasters and crises.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Threats of a natural and social nature, as well as insecurity are inherent characteristics of the environment in which tourist destinations operate. This presupposes a holistic approach when analyzing the exposure of destinations to them. Its essence, in the specific study, is organized around the manifestations of natural and social threats to the tourist destination at the destination-state level, and is derived through the INFORM index. Public data are used, allowing easy adaptation to the individual tourist destination. Their source is the base of the INFORM index, which is updated annually on the basis of over 50 different indicators. They measure threats, their subsequent risks and exposure to them to determine the degree of vulnerability and to reveal the possibilities for their limitation through available resources (INFORM index, 2022). Its matrix generates a risk profile for each country in the range of 0 to 10, monitoring the threat by a set of measures that allow easy analysis, comparison and evaluation.

The index includes three main measures: Threats and exposure to them, Vulnerability and Capacity to overcome situations (Marin-Ferrer, Vernaccini, & Poljansek, 2017). The Threats and Exposures measure includes the indicators for Natural and Social (human) threats, expressed by the sub-indicators: earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, tropical

cyclones, drought (related to natural) and current intensity of conflicts and projected risk of conflicts (related to social). Vulnerability as a measure is formed by the indicators Socio-economic vulnerability and Vulnerable groups, expressed by sub-indicators: development and poverty (50%), inequality (25%), dependence on aid (25%) (as signs of socio-economic vulnerability) and relocation of people and other vulnerable groups (as signs of vulnerable groups). The measure Capacity for overcoming situations is derived according to the indicators Institutional capacity and Infrastructure capacity and the sub-indicators: disaster risk reduction (DRR) and management; Infrastructure capacity is derived through communication infrastructure, physical infrastructure and access to the health care system.

The data of the INFORM index are freely available at [www.inform-index.org](http://www.inform-index.org). The fact that they relate to individual countries makes them particularly adaptable to the analysis and evaluation of tourist destinations considered as countries.

From a methodological point of view, INFORM is a model based on scientific publications on risk concepts. It is conceptualized according to the dualistic controversy of the risk of (natural and social threats) and the risk of (population) in seeking a balance between two main forces: the dimension of threats and the degree of exposure to them on the one hand, and vulnerability and lack of capacity for dealing with specific conditions, on the other (INFORM (a)). It also reflects the definition of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). Based on this, in the INFORM index the aspects of physical exposure and physical vulnerability are integrated in the measures of threats and exposure to them; the instability of the socio-economic system is transformed into a measure of vulnerability; the lack of resilience to cope with and recover is linked to the capacity to deal with specific conditions. This division seeks a deliberate effect related to the opening of time windows to track the results of the implementation of disaster reduction strategies over time. Another specificity is taken into account - the activities to reduce the consequences of natural and social threats, in most cases have local dimensions and affect particularly vulnerable points for the local community and capacity.

When designing the composite INFORM index, the choice of indicators is provided by the theoretical framework, which provides for them to be: relevant - justified by the available specialized literature, representative and reliable - reflecting proportional changes while avoiding common measures such as GDP per capita), transparent and conceptually clear (Marin-Ferrer et al., 2017). However, as the index is complex, some trade-offs are made with regard to the source data and the way they are interpreted for the purposes of different users. Moreover, components are identified for which no data are available or the existing ones are not relevant to their expected quality.

The INFORM index measures the impact of an event, whether natural, man-made or a combination of the two, occurring in an environment that presents a complex situation for the provision of assistance to individuals (Poljansek, Disperati, Vernaccini, Nika, Marzi & Essenfelder, 2020). The results obtained after its calculation have a global, regional, national and sub-national dimension and application, and in fact they support the preparation of risk profiles for each individual risk component and allow trend analyses to be carried out to understand how they are changing relative to each other. In this sense, the index is also a basis for making informed decisions (European commission, n.d.).

### 3. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

In order to analyze the set conditions (under threat) on INFORM, in this study are studied and derived to compare the baseline values of the indicators forming the INFORM index for 10 Balkan countries - Bulgaria, Greece, Northern Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Turkey (INFORM-(b)). As a result, specific conditions have been identified, conclusions have been drawn and a trend has been drawn in the threats to them as tourist destinations. Kosovo is not included in the analysis due to lack of data from the INFORM index.

**Table 1: General presentation of the values of the INFORM index for the destination Bulgaria**

	Values	Rank	3 yrs. trend
<b>Inform risk</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>131</b>	→
Hazard & Exposure	2.2	124	→
Vulnerability	2.3	130	→
Lack of Coping Capacity	3.0	141	→

\* Source: compiled by the author based on data from the profile of Bulgaria in INFORM Country Risk Profile, VERSION 2022, <https://drmke.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>

**Table 2: General presentation of the values of the INFORM index for the destination Greece**

	Values	Rank	3 yrs. trend
<b>Inform risk</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>122</b>	→
Hazard & Exposure	3.5	82	→
Vulnerability	2.7	123	→
Lack of Coping Capacity	2.3	160	→

\* Source: compiled by the author based on data from the profile of Greece in INFORM Country Risk Profile, VERSION 2022, <https://drmke.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>

**Table 3: General presentation of the values of the INFORM index for the destination Croatia**

	Values	Rank	3 yrs. trend
<b>Inform risk</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>140</b>	→
Hazard & Exposure	2.8	104	→
Vulnerability	1.4	164	↑
Lack of Coping Capacity	3.1	1	→

\* Source: compiled by the author based on data from the profile of Croatia in INFORM Country Risk Profile, VERSION 2022, <https://drmke.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>

**Table 4: General presentation of the values of the INFORM index for the destination Slovenia**

	Values	Rank	3 yrs. trend
<b>Inform risk</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>181</b>	→

Hazard & Exposure	1.9	142	→
Vulnerability	0.6	190	→
Lack of Coping Capacity	1.6	177	→

\*Source: compiled by the author based on data from the profile of Slovenia in INFORM Country Risk Profile, VERSION 2022, <https://drmke.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>

**Table 5: General presentation of the values of the INFORM index for the destination Bosnia and Herzegovina**

	Values	Rank	3 yrs. trend
<b>Inform risk</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>101</b>	→
Hazard & Exposure	2.5	113	→
Vulnerability	3.7	90	→
Lack of Coping Capacity	4.7	78	→

\*Source: compiled by the author based on data from the profile of Bosnia and Herzegovina in INFORM Country Risk Profile, VERSION 2022, <https://drmke.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>

**Table 6: General presentation of the values of the INFORM index for the destination Montenegro**

	Values	Rank	3 yrs. trend
<b>Inform risk</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>140</b>	→
Hazard & Exposure	2.5	113	→
Vulnerability	1.5	158	→
Lack of Coping Capacity	3.2	135	→

\*Source: compiled by the author based on data from the profile of Montenegro in INFORM Country Risk Profile, VERSION 2022, <https://drmke.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>

**Table 7: General presentation of the values of the INFORM index for the destination Albania**

	Values	Rank	3 yrs. trend
<b>Inform risk</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>122</b>	→
Hazard & Exposure	3.8	69	→
Vulnerability	1.3	167	→
Lack of Coping Capacity	4.4	91	↓

\*Source: compiled by the author based on data from the profile of Albania in INFORM Country Risk Profile, VERSION 2022, <https://drmke.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>

**Table 8: General presentation of the values of the INFORM index for the destination North Macedonia**

	Values	Rank	3 yrs. trend
<b>Inform risk</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>140</b>	→
Hazard & Exposure	2.1	130	→



Vulnerability	1.6	155	→
Lack of Coping Capacity	3.6	122	→

\* Source: compiled by the author based on data from the profile of North Macedonia in INFORM Country Risk Profile, VERSION 2022, <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>

**Table 9: General presentation of the values of the INFORM index for the destination Turkey**

	Values	Rank	3 yrs. trend
<b>Inform risk</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>45</b>	→
Hazard & Exposure	7.9	8	→
Vulnerability	4.8	57	→
Lack of Coping Capacity	3.1	137	→

\* Source: compiled by the author based on data from the profile of Turkey in INFORM Country Risk Profile, VERSION 2022, <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>

**Table 10: General presentation of the values of the INFORM index for the destination Romania**

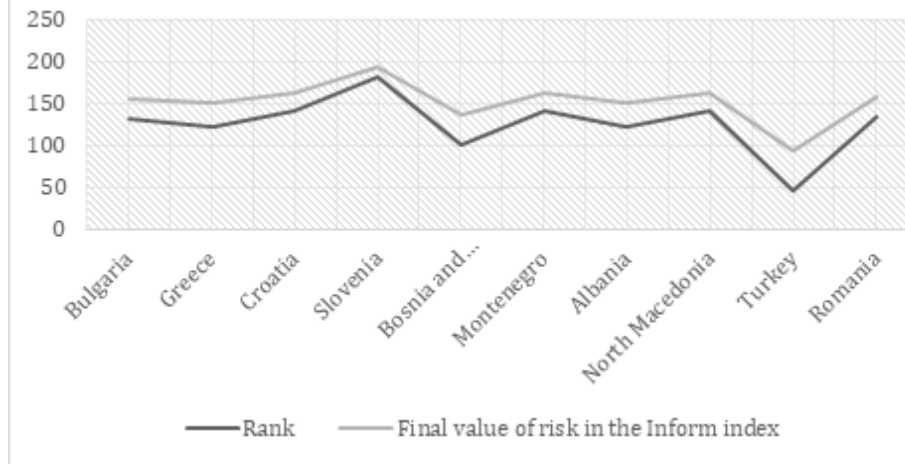
	Values	Rank	3 yr trend
<b>Inform risk</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>134</b>	→
Hazard & Exposure	2.6	111	→
Vulnerability	1.6	155	→
Lack of Coping Capacity	3.4	131	→

\* Source: compiled by the author based on data from the profile of Romania in INFORM Country Risk Profile, VERSION 2022, <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>

The comparison of the final derived value for risk according to the INFORM index for the destinations-countries on the Balkan Peninsula ranks Slovenia as the best positioned destination - with a score of 1.2, which makes it the least vulnerable to the risk of natural and social threats. It is followed by three countries Croatia, Montenegro and Northern Macedonia with a score of 2.3 and Romania with a score of 2.4. They are followed by Bulgaria - with a score of 2.5, Albania and Greece with a score of 2.8. The highest risk, respectively the most endangered by the manifestation of threats is the destination Turkey, with a score of 4.9. The risk of threats is also high for the destination Bosnia and Herzegovina with a score of 3.5. Applying a graphical approach when comparing the values of the Inform index for Bulgaria and other destinations in the region, the visualization yields the type illustrated in Fig.1.



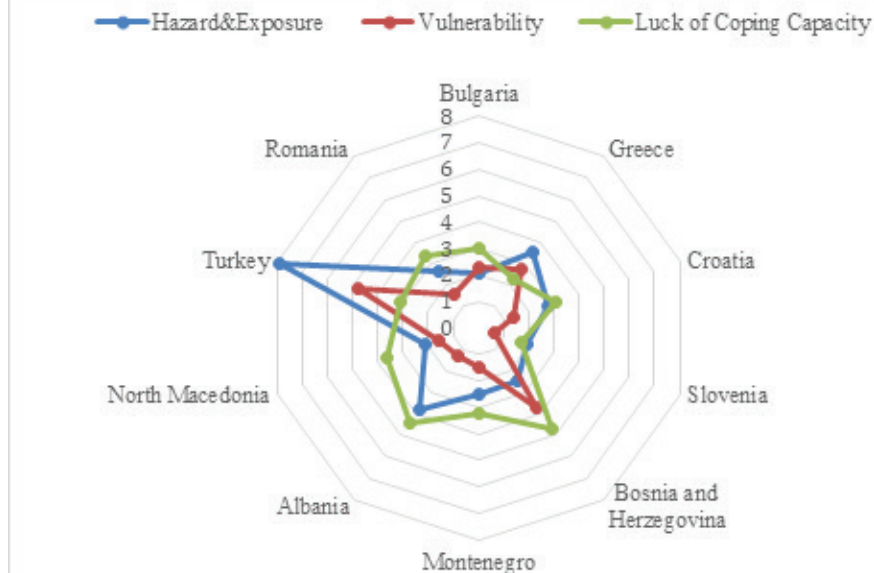
Figure 1: Comparison of the INFORM index for the analyzed destinations



\* Source: Authors' systematization according to the data from: <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index>, <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>

It is noteworthy that Bulgaria is closer to the best performing destination countries - Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro and Northern Macedonia. It is significantly better positioned than Bosnia and Herzegovina and, of course, Turkey, which has the worst position in terms of the risk of threats. However, if a graph is built that takes into account the three main components at the same time - Threats, Vulnerability and Coping Capacity, the overall picture allows for a more detailed assessment (Fig. 2).

Figure 2: Comparison of the analyzed destinations – at country level by the components of Inform



\* Source: Authors' systematization according to the data form: <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index>, <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>

The illustrative representation of the values by components shows the particularly close positions of the analyzed destinations-countries, respectively values, with respect to the Threats component. Slovenia has the best values; close to them are the results of Bulgaria, Greece, Northern Macedonia and Romania. Definitely the strongest threat is to Turkey, which is also the most vulnerable. At the same time, Turkey has a relatively good capacity to deal with threats, close to that of Bulgaria and Croatia. For Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the potential threat is within the average values for all 194 countries, the same applies to vulnerability, and the capacity to deal with it is good. In all three components, without a doubt, the best results are in Slovenia and the worst in Turkey.

### 3.1 Main findings

The global reality we are witnessing reveals the picture of growing terrorism, accompanied by financial and geopolitical tensions, in which it is difficult for individual countries to guarantee a high level of security. At the same time, the effects of natural or induced climate change cause unexpected cataclysms and, as a result, floods and droughts, snowstorms and devastating typhoons. In this case, again, reactions, whether preventive or follow-up, are generally beyond the control of the individual state. Translating the trends in these processes and phenomena to the tourism industry, it turns out that it is very vulnerable. Mostly because it takes place invariably in the scope of the natural and social environment, where these processes and phenomena manifest themselves. This finding shows that, despite the great importance attached to security and safety activities, threat mitigation measures are either insufficient or ineffective. In fact, there is no country / destination, especially in Europe, but also in the Balkans, that is able to guarantee absolute security. Simeon Nikolov, director of the Center for Strategic Studies in Security and International Relations, also expressed his opinion in this direction. According to it, Balkans geographical location continues to determine the strategic importance of the region and the interests of external forces to it. It is important that to these interests of other forces, some of which are partially modified, today is added the role of international factors with ambitions for a positive impact on the security environment, but also burdened with their shortcomings, mistakes and interests in approaching regional problems.” (Nikolov, 2019).

Globally, it is possible for individual destination countries to stay away from the manifestations of specific natural or social threats. On the Balkan Peninsula, however, the processes are more specific. On the one hand, due to territorial specificities, some threats - especially of a social nature - can affect many of them. This is the case with the waves of migrants, which since 2014 have been a permanent potential threat to Turkey, Greece, Albania, Montenegro or Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia (Progress report on the Implementation of the European Agenda on Migration, 2019). Refugees arriving on the islands of Turkey and Greece are able to compromise the tourist seasons, thus negatively affecting the volume of foreign tourist flows to these and other neighboring destinations. There is also a redistribution of this tourist flow on the territory of the peninsula. As a result, destination countries are placed in a competitive environment. So, in practice, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Croatia, and more and more often Montenegro and Albania are competing directly for the attention of European and Balkan tourists.

Of course, competition and competitiveness have a positive effect on the development of tourist destinations. In this case, however, the escalation of relations between the destination countries in the Balkans makes them weaker in the global tourism market. On the other hand, combining efforts both in terms of tourism supply (in the specifics of competition) and in terms of security, would lead to better individual and overall positioning.

## CONCLUSION

The comparison made for the selected destination countries registers the specifics of official statistics and measurements. And this must be taken into account when planning and implementing tourism policies in the Balkans. It should also be noted that since 2001, the tourism industry has faced a challenge that it has not faced so far, namely adapting to uncertainty. Periods of uncertainty and instability are getting longer, making it necessary to find the right approaches to understanding the impact of different threats on geopolitics and the economy, and in particular on tourism, while developing the necessary tools to manage their consequences. At the same time, information on the current state of security is easily accessible and public, and therefore inevitably influences tourists' attitudes to travel to destinations that are dangerous or unstable. This means not only the terrorist threat, but also the reliability of the police services, the costs of business as a consequence and prevention of terrorism and murder, climate change, etc. Therefore, it is in this direction that efforts should be concentrated and identify the approaches to the management of tourist destinations, which in the Balkans, by coordinating and cooperating efforts, can achieve a guarantee for the efficiency of functioning and improvement of regional competitiveness.

The present study presents a regional picture that stands out for its dynamic and still unceasing changes. For the Balkans, to a large extent, they also have a political character, with political connections and interactions between individual countries having both a direct and an indirect impact on the tourism industry. Therefore, it can definitely be argued that one of the benefits of the application of the Inform index is expressed in the provision of reliable and up-to-date information, which will determine the possibilities for making informed political decisions that will improve the socio-economic development of individual countries and in tourism in particular, as one of the leading industries in their economies. In view of this, a possible direction for future research could be the investigation of tourism policies and strategic documents in general, so as to identify the degree of prioritization of security and safety issues in tourism, respectively at the tourist destination level. And last but not least, the extent to which destinations on the Balkans are looking for tools to manage the possible threats.

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