

## Tourism Challenges amid COVID-19

Conclusions of the 6<sup>th</sup> Tourism International Scientific Conference (TISC) held at the Faculty of Hotel Management and Tourism in Vrnjačka Banja, June 3<sup>rd</sup> – June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Nemanja Pantić<sup>1\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Hotel Management and Tourism in Vrnjačka Banja, Serbia

For the sixth consecutive year, the TISC Conference “Tourism Challenges amid COVID-19” was successfully held at the Faculty of Hotel Management and Tourism in Vrnjačka Banja from June 3<sup>rd</sup> to June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The main focus of this year’s conference was the situation caused by COVID-19 pandemic and its impact to the travel, tourism and hospitality industry. The specificity of the situation due to COVID-19 pandemic required a special organization based on the recommendations of respective institutions. All recommended epidemiological measures of the Ministry of Health and the National Crisis Committee for the Control of Infectious Diseases were implemented. The TISC 2021 was organized by the Faculty in partnership with numerous domestic and foreign institutions, with the support of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia. Conference gathered a significant number of domestic and foreign participants from Austria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Romania, Slovakia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia.

The meeting was officially opened by Prof. Drago Cvijanović, the Dean of the Faculty of Hotel Management and Tourism in Vrnjačka Banja, with the gratitude to all attendees which came to the meeting despite the COVID-19 pandemic thereby showing a special honor to the Faculty. In the plenary session, the attendees had an opportunity to hear three keynote speakers, Prof. Wadim Strielkowski from Czech Republic, Dr. Michael Wukoschitz from Austria and Prof. Andrei Jean-Vasile from Romania who presented the co-authored paper he prepared together with Mihaela Cristina Drăgoi.

**Wadim Strielkowski** is a professor at Prague Business School, Research Fellow at the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Senior Researcher at the Cambridge Institute for Advanced Studies, a Managing Director of Prague Institute for Qualification Enhancement, and a Visiting Professor at the University of California, Berkeley. He is a top reviewer in Cross-Field (top 1% in field). Profesor Strielkowski works as an expert for the European Commission and consultancies in several European Union countries, China, United States, and Russian Federation. **Michael Wukoschitz**, Ph.D., is Attorney at Law and Member of Vienna Bar since 1996. His practice areas include Travel & Tourism Law, Food & Drug Law, International Sales, Product Liability, Advertising, Unfair Competition, Intellectual Property, Consumer Affairs, Aviation. He is President Emeritus of International Forum of Travel and Tourism Advocates (IFTTA) and appointed President in several mandates (2008-

---

\* [nemanja.pantic@kg.ac.rs](mailto:nemanja.pantic@kg.ac.rs)



This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

---

2016). He is member of German Travel Law Association (DGfR), International Travel Law Network (ITLN), European Air Law Association (EALA), European Law Institute (ELI), International Association on Protection of Intellectual Property (AIPPI), International League for Competition Law (LIDC). **Andrei Jean-Vasile**, PhD, is full professor at Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti and scientific researcher at National Institute for Economic Research Costin C. Kirişescu, Romanian Academy. He is co-founder and Head of the Research Network on Resources Economics and Bioeconomy (RebResNet). Issues like agricultural and resources economics, bioeconomy, micro and macroeconomics are among his research and scientific interests.

Keynote speakers delivered presentations on the following topics: “*International Tourism and COVID-19: Post-Pandemic Recovery Strategies*”; “*Tour Organisers and Suppliers – Partners or Opponents in the Crisis*”; “*COVID Crisis and Tourism Evolution in Some European Countries: Adapt to Realities or Reinvent the Future?*”. The first presentations was delivered by Prof. Strielkowski via live video stream, followed by the presentations delivered on-site by Dr. Wukoschitz and Prof. Jean-Vasile.

The topic of the conference is current and refers to the problems that tourism is facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants had the opportunity to hear the practical experiences of lecturers from the Serbia and abroad regarding the condition of tourism in the last 15 months. The presentation of papers was organized in one session with the following papers: “A new context and aesthetics of Serbian traditional cuisine in the age of pandemic”, “Does EU funding support the diversification of the tourism offer in Serbia as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic?”, “The COVID-19 pandemic effects on the hotel industry”, “Psychological approaches in psychotherapy and health tourism during COVID-19 pandemic”, “Performance of regional tourism during COVID-19 in the area of northern Slovakia”. Thematics proceedings with a total of 33 scientific papers (59 authors/co-authors) is available to the scientific audience (ISBN 978-86-89949-53-7). The Research Network on Resources Economics and Bioeconomy Association (RebResNet) awarded appropriate prizes to the young researchers up to the age of 35. The quality of the works was equal, so the award was split between the authors of 3 papers. The first work entitled “The role of travel health insurance in tourism development – challenges and perspectives” is authored by Danijela Glušac. The second one “The role of employer brand in hotel companies during COVID-19 crisis” is co-authored by Jasmina Ognjanović and Marijana Bugarčić and third entitled “Tourism policy challenges amid COVID-19” is co-authored by Miljan Leković and Sonja Milutinović. Other papers were presented in the form of poster presentations in the Faculty premises. The authors had the opportunity to share the results of their research and answer the questions of all interested participants.

As a result of the presentation of papers, exchange of practical and theoretical experiences as well as discussions, the following conclusions of the conference can be pointed out:

- For the tourism industry, pandemic presents an opportunity – and at the same time a challenge – to restore the relationship of trust with travelers. Because in the future, the choice of destinations and means of transport will increasingly depend on the guarantees and securities that tourism providers can provide.
- Among the measures recommended by United Nations and OECD are that the countries have to protect jobs, as well as to implement new technologies. To mitigate the effects of the crisis and accelerate the recovery of tourism and the economy, the international organizations generally recommend the states to open their borders with responsibility, to implement safety and security protocols, to improve travelers’ confidence and to focus on innovation and sustainability as the new normal in the near future.

- Although some crises have a great global impact on the development of tourism, what has always accompanied such phenomena is the fact that tourism has always shown an exceptional ability to recover. Every crisis requires an adequate and timely response in order to overcome it.
- As the pandemic progresses, insurers must learn to provide current and reliable information to their customers; they must be proactive and prepared for quick reactions and answers. To keep their clients' confidence, they must continue to interact with them in a productive working atmosphere.
- The rapidly changing context in the modern tourism and hospitality industry has led to an increased emphasis on communication strategies, together with responding to the needs of increasingly demanding consumers, and with the fragmented nature of the marketing and media environment.
- Given that a number of restrictions remains in place and that it is not possible to predict how long the epidemic will last, it is difficult to estimate when the recovery of tourism will begin. Therefore, national and local tourist organizations will have to make a great effort in the realization of promotional activities aimed at foreign markets, but also towards domestic tourists in order to travel more within their country.
- The pandemic of COVID-19 disease caused by the new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 quickly became a global and multidimensional problem. The fear of infection, social distancing, economic problems, cessation of normal daily functioning, and pervasive uncertainty are just some of the factors that affect mental health in the short and long term.
- The global tourism industry has faced a huge crisis due to the global COVID-19 outbreak. What is noticeable, based on the insight into statistical data, is that global tourism is in a far bigger crisis than domestic tourism. The closure of borders, the abolition of international routes and the "stay at home" recommendations and measures had a negative impact on international tourism.
- The COVID-19 virus pandemic is the biggest challenge the world has faced since World War II. Tourism needs open borders, and stable political and socio-economic climate, and, above all, safe health and security conditions.
- What is certain is that the COVID-19 pandemic will last for a significant amount of time. The consequences can only be glimpsed at for now, and we will be able to fully measure and understand them after the pandemic is over. Furthermore, their remediation will be a long-lasting process, and overcoming the consequences of the crisis and returning the world to a pre-pandemic situation depends on the economic policy carriers and their knowledge and experience.
- Although the COVID-19 pandemic has left very severe consequences on tourism as an industry, and it is still uncertain how long this effect will last even when and whether it will return to pre-pandemic levels, some areas of tourism may have their chance in such a difficult situation. This would be especially true for domestic tourism.

Finally, as a result of the exchange of experiences and knowledge of the conference participants, a general conclusion can be underlined that tourism, although the most affected economic activity, is still the activity that has the greatest potential for rapid recovery in the

post-crisis period. In support of this is, above all, the desire of people to travel and make up for what was lost during the COVID-19 pandemic.