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THE ROLE OF SMART-SPECIALISATION IN THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION

Smart-specialisation is an important tool for boosting regional development, as experienced by its effective use in the EU. «In 2010, the EU proclaimed its vision for the development of regions in particular and the economy as a whole in the Europe 2020 strategy, the priorities of which were defined as «smart development based on knowledge and innovation»; sustainable development that ensures more efficient use of resources and competitiveness; comprehensive development leading to higher employment of the economically active population, social and territorial integrity» [1].

The implementation of smart solutions is supported by national and European public policies through financial instruments, methodologies, strategies and legal frameworks. Regions contribute to implementing smart concepts through their knowledge of specific local needs.

In addition, when developing regional RIS3 strategies, regions need to be involved in discussing what types of operational programmes will be presented in the partnership contract. Each region should conduct its own analysis of funding needs and opportunities for its RIS3 strategies. This involves private investment, as one of the explicit objectives of RIS3 included in the conditionality criteria is to attract private investment [7].

In 2016, the EU established the Smart Specialisation Platform for the Modernisation of Industries [10] as a tool that combines smart-specialisation and interregional cooperation to increase the competitiveness of innovations in economic sectors. Its main goal is to coordinate the efforts of EU regions, their clusters and partners working together to create investment projects in smart-specialisation through interregional cooperation. The EU believes that innovation and competitiveness of European regions must be enhanced for Europe to prosper in a globalised world; EU programmes for supporting innovation must be improved; interregional cooperation must be expanded; and the focus on less developed regions must be strengthened. The EU's cluster policy is manifested through the development of clusters. The EU believes that creating more jobs and registering more international trademarks and patents should be more innovative [4].

Thus, an effective tool for the strategic development of the region and the formation of sustainable competitive advantages, which has proven its effectiveness in the practice of regional governance in the EU, is to identify vital smart-specialisations of the region and concentrate efforts on its implementation. Therefore, the basic requirements for successful smart-specialisation at the regional level are as follows: substantiation of promising areas and activities; priority of resource provision; recognition of the latest knowledge and stimulation of innovation; and mutual coordination of stakeholder efforts. This will result in creating new jobs in the region,

achieving regional competitiveness, increasing the innovative level of the regional economy, and improving the standard of living and quality of life of the region's population. At the same time, in order to achieve an effective level of implementation of smart-specialisation projects, it is necessary to choose a regional methodology for assessing the peculiarities of innovative development of the industry [3]. However, it is impossible to realise the potential of smart-specialisation, regardless of the chosen assessment methods, without appropriate funding. There is financial support from various European financial institutions and funds. Similar studies were conducted by the following researchers: Boes, K., Buhalis, D., Inversini, A. [1], Chao, C.-C., Hazari, B. R., Laffargue, J.-P., Sgro, P.M., [3], Cocola-Gant, A, Lopez-Gay, A. [4], Gretzel, U., Werthner, H., Koo, C., Lamsfus, C. [5], Harb, G., Bassil, C. [7], Parrilla, J. C., Font, A. R., Nadal, J. R., Bezkhlibna A. [2] et al.

Some scholars observe negative economic consequences of tourism development. For example, some scholars [8] point out that tourism is a labour-intensive industry, so smart-specialisation can lead to a decrease in efficiency and productivity. This approach also indicates that tourism development can crowd out human capital investments, as they are not rewarded in the context of tourism. Other scholars [9] believe that tourism can significantly reduce the value of natural and cultural resources in the long term due to increased tourist pressure. The authors of [4] believe that some tourism development processes may be associated with eliminating jobs in other sectors and reducing economic diversity as a result of the so-called «Dutch disease», which affects the overall sustainability of the regional economic system. Such critical approaches are aimed at the processes of smart-specialisation. The obvious processes of smart-specialisation in tourism are related to the concept of the smart tourism ecosystem, which is characterised by the intensive use of information and smart technologies to provide an intelligent tourist experience [6]. Some scholars see smart-specialisation in tourism as an opportunity to stimulate economic growth, for example, by reducing the cost of labour-intensive activities and supporting more efficient tourism management [1; 6]. On the other hand, they argue that smart-specialisation in tourism can exacerbate an unstable economy. For example, digital

travel platforms such as Airbnb can displace investments in other industries and contribute to gentrification processes [5]. In addition, the introduction of smart platforms in tourism may lead to reducing investment in the quality of human resources. However, we note that the positive relationship between regional tourism specialisation and economic growth may depend on the characteristics of the structural and regional economy.

To sum up, smart-specialisation plays an important role in the tourism development in the region and is a driving force for a positive impact on the region's economy, as tourism is considered one of the affected sectors of the economy during COVID-19 and requires new initiatives.

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