
Mitigating Risk of the Tourism Sector in the European Union Member States During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract:

Purpose: The article presents, in a multidimensional perspective, the instruments applied in EU member states to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the tourism sector.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Research conducted in the article was based on secondary data. Research methods applied in the paper include critical review of literature, method of comparative analysis and secondary data analysis.

Findings: The outcome of the article is the identification of actions undertaken in EU member states to support the tourism sector and original elaboration on the scheme of instruments used by EU authorities and countries in order to limit the epidemic risk in tourism.

Practical Implications: The analysis and evaluation carried out in the article demonstrated that risk management in EU member states' tourist sectors at the time of pandemic requires integrated protective measures. The results may be used to develop a long-term strategy for the EU's tourism sector and programmes for prevention of crisis outcomes in other sectors of the economy as well.

Originality/value: In the perspective presented herein, issues related to the epidemic risk in the tourism sector, discussed in the article, have not been the subject of scientific analyses in domestic or foreign literature.

Keywords: Risk, risk management, tourism, financial instruments, operational instruments, pandemic, COVID-19, European Union.

JEL classification: Z32, Z30, H12, I15, H71, L83.

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1. Introduction

Contemporary economic reality is characterised by a high degree of increasing risk and uncertainty in achieving an organisation's established objectives. For many enterprises, including those in the tourism industry, a fundamental area of interest are issues related to the organisation's operating efficiency. Among these, issues related to reliability and risk in organisation management play an important part. Recognition of omnipresence of various kinds of threats which reduce the enterprise's operating efficiency inspires the need to identify them from the point of view of risk generation areas and impact onto the organisation.

Caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, the COVID-19 pandemic constitutes an unprecedented disruption of the global economy, including disruption of the tourism sector. Losses of the European tourism industry, caused by the epidemic threat, are estimated at approximately one billion euros per month (WTO, 2020). Impact of the pandemic is noticeable both on the supply side, i.e. functioning of the tourism sector enterprises, and on the demand side, i.e. consumers' behaviours. In the era of COVID-19 pandemic, risk management in the tourism sector requires systemic actions mitigating its effects for particular countries' economies.

2. Scope and Methodology

The purpose of the article is to present the essence of functioning of the tourism sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, and an attempt to answer the question whether it may be limited and what instruments may be used to mitigate it in order to avoid bankruptcies and employment reductions in the tourism sector. Consequently, the following research question is asked: are the risk mitigation measures, proposed by EU member states at the time of COVID-19 pandemic, appropriate for the tourism sector? Verification of the research question and accomplishment of the purpose of the article is performed based on a critical review of source literature, comparative analysis and secondary data analysis. The research was carried out on the basis of quantitative data concerning the tourism sector in EU member states, available in public statistics of the EU and 27 EU member states, reports of the World Tourism Organization, World Travel & Tourism Council and an analysis of available literature on the subject.

The research process stages included: evaluation of the current state of knowledge on risks in the tourism sector and research into instruments aimed at limiting the risk of pandemic caused by the coronavirus. Identification of theoretical issues was done based on an analysis of available literature in the area of tourism economics, tourism policy and risk management. The research covered all EU member states and involved verifying consequences of epidemic risk materialisation for the tourism sector as well as analysing risk mitigation instruments in each of the EU member states. The analysis led to development of an original outline of instruments applied by EU authorities and member states.

In pursuit of the research objective, the first part of the article presents a review of

literature, while the second part covers research connected with mitigation of the risk related to operation of the tourism sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. The publication ends with conclusions. As the issue undertaken is extensive and multidimensional, the article focuses on presenting the most significant problems.

3. Literature review

The tourism sector is a quantified aggregate of diverse sectors of the economy, created or stimulated in connection with tourists' trips and stays (Cornelissen, 2017; Matias *at al.*, 2011), which is not a homogenous part of the economy. It is made up of business entities belonging to numerous sectors of the national economy. However, its goods and services are used not only by tourists, but also by permanent residents of tourist destinations (Yuan *at al.*, 2014; Gołembski, 2002).

A method of determination of the place of tourism in the economic division criteria is identification of the so-called direct and indirect tourism economy. Direct tourism economy includes, above all:

- hospitality – all accommodation facilities (including hotels, motels, guesthouses, tourist houses, hostels, youth hostels, organised stay resorts and summer camp resorts),
- gastronomy – all gastronomy entities, including hotel gastronomy,
- transport – connected with transporting tourists,
- travel agencies – tour operators, tourism agents and brokers,
- trade – dealing with sales of sports items, souvenirs, literature and tourist maps,
- culture – museums, galleries, theme parks,
- sport and physical culture – sports and leisure facilities.

Indirect tourism economy includes, among others, the sectors of banking, insurance, passenger transport, other commercial entities, post offices and telecommunications, protection of natural environment and municipal economy (WTTC, 2010). According to the above division, the tourism sector may be defined narrowly as direct tourism economy and, broadly, as the sum of elements of direct and indirect tourism economy.

The tourism sector is very sensitive to global factors: economic crises, climate changes (connected with intensification of extreme phenomena, such as floods, hurricanes), natural disasters (volcano eruptions, earthquakes), disease threats (e.g. AIDS or flu pandemic), intensification of terrorism and conflicts on ethnic or religious background, as all such phenomena result in a lowered sense of security among tourists staying in respective regions and they clearly involve reduced tourism demand (Zdon-Korzeniowska and Rachwał, 2011; Trock, 2015). As a result of omnipresence of various kinds of threats, operational reliability of tourism enterprises is reduced, which exposes them to a risk.

There are different interpretations of risk in the literature. Academic discussion spins around the relationships of risk with the notions of uncertainty, likelihood of events, threats, above-average benefits (Ward and Chapman, 2003). Perception of risk has evolved over time. One may observe that the first considerations concerning the nature of risk conducted on the basis of economic sciences focused on confrontation of casual and academic understanding of the notions of risk and uncertainty as well as their meaning in the context of the theory of probability (Romeike, 2004; Holliwell, 2001). Contemporarily, two main approaches to risk may be identified: negative and neutral. The negative concept interprets risk as possible non-achievement of the expected result and, consequently, risk is associated with a set of negative notions, such as “threat”, “loss”, “danger” (Małkowska-Borowczyk, 2012). The neutral concept is dominated by the perception of risk as a condition of uncertainty as to future outcomes of certain occurrences. Their effect is better than expected or worse than expected and, thus, in some situations risk is an opportunity, while in others it is a threat and involves a likelihood of loss or gain (Cornett and Saunders, 2003; Jajuga, 2008).

The risk of a tourism enterprise may be defined as a risk of financial and reputational losses and that of legal liability as a result of non-adaptation or unreliability of processes and resources necessary for the processes (personal, material, information and financial resources), occurring in consequence of disruptions resulting from operation of internal and external threats (Zawiła-Niedźwiecki, 2010). As far as factors influencing the risk are concerned, the following ought to be distinguished (Inamura *at al.*, 2015):

- specific (internal) risk, determined by the entity’s resources,
- systematic (external) risk, determined by the surrounding environment.

The surrounding environment is a source of various forces and events which jointly determine the conditions in which enterprises conduct business. These include factors which stimulate enterprises’ growth and those whose impact significantly limits that growth or even sometimes prevents it completely (Buhrmann *at al.*, 2013; Conrad and Sydow, 2011; Urbanowska-Sojkin, 2014). An example of a force with negative influence onto the tourism sector is the COVID-19 pandemic (Czernicki *at al.*, 2020). This factor falls within the category of epidemic risk. This phenomenon is classified as a low probability occurrence, usually leading to irreversible losses and unfavourable influence onto business activity results (Brooks *at al.*, 2020; Ogurtsov *et al.*, 2008). However, individual losses are characterised with high value, while the likelihood of materialisation and scope of damage is not dependent on man, as losses are suffered simultaneously by many affected entities (Soliwoda *et al.*, 2017; Santos, 2009; Strupczewski, 2008).

The virus pandemic has unprecedented impact onto the societies and economy worldwide (Açikgöz and Günay, 2020; del Rio-Chanona *et al.*, 2020; Dowdle, 2006; Dwyer, 2020). Its consequences may be divided into two categories: one connected

directly with the infection of millions of people, and the other one connected with actions supposed to limit spreading of the virus (i.e. suspension of air traffic, closed borders, cancelled sports events, assembly bans). Security measures undertaken on the legislative level to fight the virus significantly increased the risk related to operation of the tourism sector and required undertaking actions connected with management of that risk (Adamska, 2009). This process consists of four stages: risk identification, risk evaluation, taking action on the risk and risk control. Taking into account the current pandemic related situation, acceptable risk ought to be evaluated taking into account macroeconomic conditions, individual factors specific for the tourism enterprise and its competitive environment (Van Bavel *et al.*, 2020). Underestimation of business risk involves likely exposure of the enterprise to losses or it may even result in its insolvency. On the other hand, excessively protective behaviours of managers weaken the enterprise's ability to generate profits and, consequently, lower its profitability and competitiveness. Management of epidemic risk in the tourism sector requires extensive actions, especially in the area of particular countries' economic policies.

4. Mitigation of the Risk Related to Operation of the Tourism Sector during the COVID-19 Pandemic

4.1 Consequences of Epidemic Risk Materialisation for the Tourism Sector

Risk is connected with possible occurrences or circumstances which may jeopardise accomplishment of organisational objectives (Susanto and Meiryani, 2018). Considering risk categories, its effects may relate to the strategic, financial and operational level (Kota and Dragon, 2015).

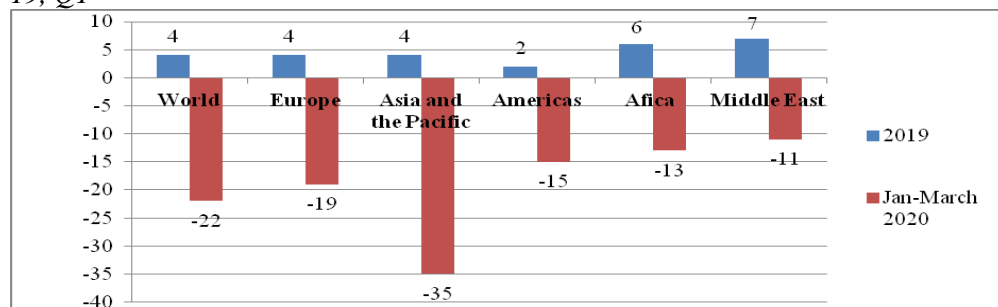
Risk and consequences of its materialisation affect the following groups of entities in the tourism sector: staff (including their sense of satisfaction and security of work), suppliers (dependent on the enterprise's ability to collect and pay for the goods and services delivered), clients, collaborators, investors, lending institutions, competition (Ronka-Chmielowiec, 2009; The Global Risks Report 2019 14th Edition, 2019). Regardless of the kind, nature and extent of losses caused by materialisation of the epidemic risk, each of the losses may be expressed in financial terms, which has negative impact on financial liquidity of tourism businesses. Deteriorated financial liquidity involves further negative economic consequences for operation of this sector's entities (Grabowska, 2017; Sierpińska and Jachna, 2020). The main consequences include worsening of the market position as compared with competitors, possibility to lose a part of the market share and clients, lack of flexibility in decision making, deteriorated financial results, limited development of tourism sector entities or, last but not least, the threat of bankruptcy. That, in turn, leads to overall weakening in terms of economic condition of the tourism sector businesses in the market, both on the demand and supply sides. At the same time, worse financial results provide lending institutions with a signal on growing financial risk, which results in introduction of more stringent requirements concerning access to external financing instruments. That translates into growing

interest rates, requirements to establish higher and more effective collaterals as well as implementation of restrictions related to debt repayment (such as shorter lending periods). Thus, the epidemic risk considerably influences the financial risk of tourism sector entities.

Quantifying the effects of epidemic risk materialisation is difficult as the sample of historical cases is insignificant. The World Bank estimates that the pandemic may reduce the global GDP by as much as 4.8% in the worst case scenario (pandemic similar to the “Spanish flu”), by 3.1% in a moderate scenario (pandemic comparable to the flu of 1958) and by 0.7% in a mild scenario (pandemic similar to the flu of 1968) (Word Bank, 2020; Khan *et al.*, 2020).

The tourism sector will be affected the most severely by losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This results from two factors. One of them is demand for tourism services, limited in the situation of uncertainty. The other factor are the administrative restrictions imposed, which limit the possibility to travel, including in particular the ability to travel abroad (Czernicki, Kukołowicz and Miniszewski, 2020; Gössling, Scott and Hall, 2020). Faced with the COVID-19 pandemic, 100% of global tourism destinations introduced temporary travel limitations, while 72% of them suspended international tourism activity completely (UNWTO, 2020). In the first quarter of 2020, direct effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are, above all, down 22% in international tourism, down 67% in international arrivals and down USD 80 trillion revenue in exports (WTO, 2020). This is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Dynamics of international tourism turnovers in consequence of COVID-19, Q1



Source: (WTO, 2020).

Despite the main negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as enumerated above, diversified business activity of a country provides much more space and possibilities to prevent possible recession. That, in particular, relates to these member states of the European Union which have a national economy composed of diversified sectors and which have so far demonstrated significant pace of economic growth, because that becomes a natural safety catalyst for entities conducting business in the tourism sector. As far as countries whose economies are strongly dependent on the tourism sector are concerned, the following ought to be mentioned: Italy, Spain, France and Greece (over 10% share in GDP). The primary negative effect of crisis for the tourism sector as a result of materialisation of the epidemic risk will be accelerated

deglobalisation trend. Mitigation of this phenomenon is, above all, active policy of the European Union, as well as financial, regulatory and operational support.

4.2 Review of Instruments Addressed to the Tourism Sector in EU Member States in Consequence of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. until the first quarter of 2020), the tourism sector generated approximately 10-11% of the European Union's total GDP, being a key source of employment and revenue in many European regions. The tourism industry accounted for 12% of all jobs in the European Union (that means that 27 million people in the EU worked directly or indirectly in tourism) and included 3 million enterprises, 90% of them belonging to the SME sector (European Parliament, 2020). Annual gross added value of tourism in the EU in 2019 was initially estimated at EUR 787 billion (Eurostat, 2020). The average number of trips in the summer season (from June to August in the EU) was 385 million, during which EU residents spent EU 190 billion (European Commission, 2020a). Consequently, due to enormous importance of the tourism sector to the economies of European Union member states, numerous actions aimed at elimination of restrictive measures and – at the same time – allowing restoration of tourist traffic in the regions of the European Union are being undertaken. EU's authorities are pursuing work aimed at gradual and coordinated reopening of tourism facilities, depending on the epidemiological situation in particular member states. Activities focused on relaunching tourism services in the EU are being conducted slowly, as the priorities are security and protection of both travellers and employees of the sector throughout Europe.

The activities of EU's bodies are focused on ensuring liquidity to tourism enterprises during the pandemic, including in particular entities of the SME sector, threatened with bankruptcy and reduction of employment, by means of (European Commission, 2020b):

- vouchers being an attractive and safe alternative to refunds for cancelled trips,
- protection of jobs thanks to financial assistance at the amount of EUR 100 billion within the SURE programme (among others, coverage of the costs of national mechanisms related to reduced working time, supporting partnerships facilitating change of employees' qualifications),
- acquainting Europeans with the local tourism offering, promoting local tourist attractions and promoting Europe as a safe and most popular tourist destination worldwide,
- financial support via an investment initiative in response to the coronavirus, loans of the European Investment Fund and flexibility in enforcing state aid principles.

Global crisis connected with COVID-19 has caused adoption of actions mitigating its effects in tourism in virtually all European countries which have implemented a number of instruments limiting the tourism sector's risk at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic (Grima *et al.*, 2020). Two groups have been distinguished based on an analysis thereof: financial instruments and operational instruments.

Most financial instruments have been implemented at the governmental level of particular countries and they generally affect entities conducting business activity, including business activity in the tourism sector. The instruments are classified by the European Commission into four groups (European Commission, 2020c): (1) spending measures, (2) fiscal measures, (3) sectoral and regional, or measures other than fiscal, (4) all other measures. The purpose of the instruments is to assist and mitigate financial effects to citizens and sectors of the economy particularly affected with the pandemic, including tourism. One ought to emphasise that the instruments being implemented differ from one another, as they are adapted to the situation and conditions in individual EU member states; however, with respect to the tourism sector one ought to mention:

- loans, credits and loan guarantees for enterprises (e.g. Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark); suspension of interest or instalment repayments (e.g. Estonia, Latvia, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovakia),
- reliefs/deferrals in repayment of tax liabilities for entrepreneurs (e.g. Estonia, Latvia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden, Belgium, Czech Republic),
- lowering of taxes, e.g. excise tax (e.g. Estonia, Germany, Denmark), sales taxes on non-alcoholic beverages sold at cafes, bars and restaurants (e.g. Greece) or deferral of taxes on alcoholic beverages (e.g. the Netherlands),
- subsidising a part of remuneration of persons employed in sectors most severely affected by the pandemic, including tourism (e.g. Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia); demurrage pay (e.g. Greece, France),
- separate tourism support budget/instrument/plan (e.g. Spain, France, Cyprus, Ireland, Finland); subsidising a part of the costs of lease/rent for branches or enterprises of the tourism sector (e.g. Sweden, Czech Republic),
- exemption from social security premiums (e.g. Spain, France, Hungary, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and – partly – Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden), taxes on salaries or personal income tax payable by the employer (e.g. Hungary, Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark),
- direct (non-refundable) financial support (e.g. compensation) to enterprises most severely affected with the COVID-19 pandemic, including tourism enterprises (e.g. Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden, Germany),

- financial support via national tourism organisations to cover losses in tourism (e.g. Hungary),
- direct financial support to transport enterprises (e.g. airlines in Latvia),
- indirect financial support to transport companies (e.g. reduced tax on sales of ferry, flight and bus tickets in Greece),
- consumption bonds/vouchers/coupons for citizens (e.g. Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany), supporting tourism sector entities such as restaurants or bars (e.g. France, Lithuania – for health care staff only), hotels and other accommodation facilities (e.g. Italy, Poland).

The tourism sector in EU member states has been most severely affected with the COVID-19 pandemic; thus, the extensive spectrum of financial instruments presented constitutes the main axis of support to that sector. However, detailed analysis of measures implemented to restart tourism in EU member states allows identification of one more group referred to as operational instruments. The group includes non-financial instruments which have been implemented or are planned for implementation, materially supplementing support to the sector in question.

Health monitoring applications are an innovative instrument of struggle against COVID-19. The applications are used to monitor the so-called digital medical profile. They contain medical data confirming that a respective tourist is not sick with the coronavirus. Data on travellers' health condition are to be obtained from entities accredited by the ministry of health. A pilot programme is to be carried out in the Canary Islands (Spain). Another application is being tested in Estonia, namely an electronic immunity passport collecting data on coronavirus test results. One ought to add that the European Commission stresses that installation of such applications ought to be voluntary and geolocation data should not be used. Some countries require passengers to submit a health and travel record in the traditional form, i.e. as a filled in Passenger Locator Form (e.g. Ireland) or a health declaration (e.g. the Netherlands).

Persons entering some EU member states are obliged to have and furnish at the border a medical certificate confirming negative result of a SAR-CoV-2 molecular-biological test (e.g. entry into Austria). Moreover, some EU member states have introduced coronavirus tests for travellers (for all or randomly picked travellers – e.g. Greece, Cyprus) or are planning to introduce an immunity passport (e.g. Germany). The document would be issued to all persons who have already recovered from the coronavirus caused disease.

Operational instruments supporting the EU's tourism sector include "travelling bubbles" or "tourism bubbles" or "tourism corridors". These constitute arrangements on the free movement of people between two or more selected countries with a similar epidemiological situation where high numbers of coronavirus tests are carried out and reactivation of a new wave of infections does not occur (e.g. the so-called "Baltic bubble" covering Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, "tourism corridor"

between the Czech Republic and Croatia or between Malta, Austria, Norway, Luxembourg, Serbia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Latvia and Lithuania which are also potentially considering this possibility).

Another instrument identified within the discussed group are detailed health recommendations and protocols at hospitality and gastronomy facilities, relating to guest service, housekeeping, disinfection and maintenance, as well as risk management at the time of pandemic (e.g. in the form of guidebooks in Spain). They are an important element in the tourism sector, which is why many EU member states have focused on actions aimed at enhancing sanitary requirements, including in fact hotels and restaurants.

There is another measure which deserves attention, namely foreign promotion of countries pursued mainly in those countries where a lower rate of coronavirus infections is recorded. One of the first countries to launch such a campaign in May 2020 was Cyprus. The promotional slogan “Missed Us? We are back? Travel safely to Cyprus” relates to the current situation, but is also expected to develop a sense of security among future tourists.

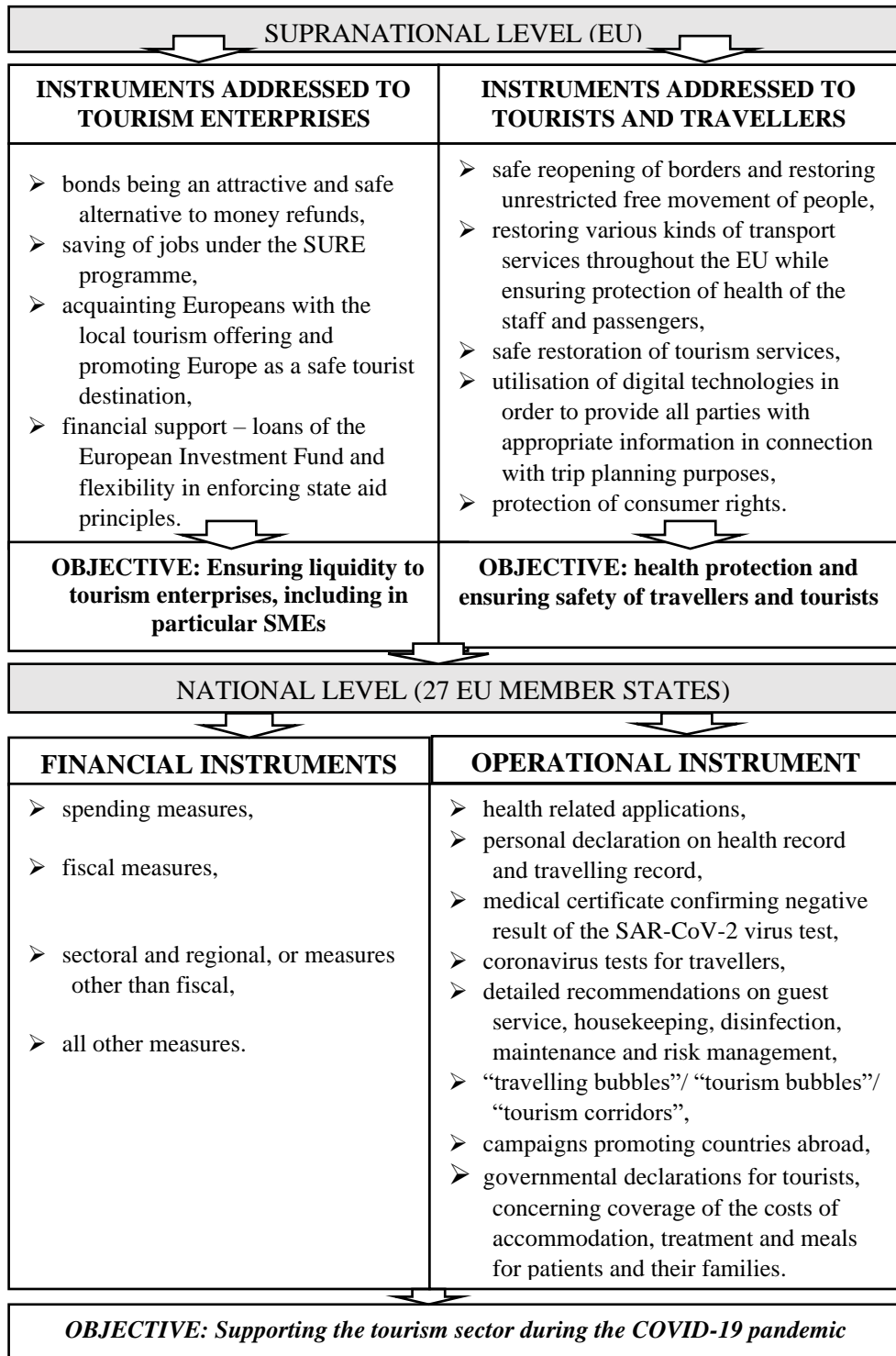
The so-called declarations for tourists are an interesting operational instrument. The authorities of Cyprus undertake that in case of coronavirus infection as a result of stay on the island they will cover the costs of accommodation, treatment and meals for patients and their families. In that case, tourists will have to cover the costs of return flight home and airport transfer.

On the one hand, the above operational instruments impact the safety and health of a country’s residents, while on the other hand they are expected to give a sense of safety to tourists, which may determine their decisions concerning foreign trip destinations and, consequently, support the tourism sectors of the countries which have implemented the instruments. The issues of safety and health, including access to medical facilities and their standards, will undoubtedly be a priority in the nearest future in connection with selecting tourism destinations, which will impact tourism demand in particular countries and directly influence the standing of business entities in their tourism sectors.

5. Mitigation of the Risk related to Operation of the Tourism Sector during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Tourism is an important sector of the European Union’s economy, which is why it has had its separate legal basis since 2009. Unfortunately, the sector has not had a separate budget so far. That concerns as well the multiannual financial frameworks for 2014-2020, implemented currently, as well as those planned for 2021-2027. That was certainly contributed to by the fact that the sector has recorded highly dynamic development in the last decades and, as compared with other, more problematic areas of EU economy, it did not require such great attention.

Figure 2. Instruments mitigating the effects of COVID-19 pandemic in EU tourism



Source: own analysis.

The main issue discussed on the EU's forum was the phenomenon of so-called excessive tourism and its effects (European Parliament, 2018), and all actions and projects focused on supporting and promoting tourism – sustainable, responsible, ethical or based on endogenic resources.

Although tourism does not have its own budget within the European Union, it was observed already at the beginning of work connected with counteracting negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic that the sector requires particular attention and support. Instruments supporting the tourism sector were established both at the supranational level and in all member states. Their extensive spectrum was channelled to a large extent directly to business entities operating in the analysed sector. These instruments are mainly of financial nature. At the same time, some instruments – mostly operational ones – were dedicated to travellers and tourists. This group of measures is expected to indirectly impact restart of EU's tourism. Figure 2 presents the outcome of analyses related to instruments applied by EU authorities and members states, enabling reduction of the epidemic risk in the tourism sector.

One ought to emphasise that the instruments identified and presented in the article are of a dynamic nature and the classification presented herein is not exhaustive due to ongoing work on both the national and supranational levels. However, evaluation of the implemented actions and instruments in terms of effectiveness will be important in the future. It ought to be stressed that the current difficult situation in the tourism sector is a certain starting point for future transformation. That should concern various aspects. First, analysis of the tourism sector's place in the EU's operating areas and, consequently, issues related to the budget or other support instruments. Second, identification of development directions and analysis of possible comprehensive approach to that issue, for example in the form of a common remedy plan or operating strategy. These aspects may be difficult to be developed on the EU forum, for example due to disproportions in the share of tourism in particular countries' GDPs or other particular interests of the countries. Still, it seems necessary as it is known that extreme situations (namely, excessive tourism but also lack of tourism) have negative consequences for national economies and residents of particular countries. Moreover, current situation in the tourism sector constitutes an opportunity to change its trajectory towards sustainable development, along with taking digital transformation into account.

Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the tourism sector of the European Union are significant and unprecedented. Their accurate evaluation will only be possible in the future, but it is already known that tourists' decisions regarding travelling destinations will in the nearest future be determined mostly by the reasons of security and health protection. Thus, supporting tourism requires decisive and thoughtful actions, as well as implementation of appropriate instruments. To a large extent, they will determine the feasibility and pace of restoration of the tourism sector in EU member states.

6. Conclusions

The tourism sector plays an important role for the single market and its four freedoms, but it also has a significant contribution into the economic, social and cultural lifestyle in the European Union. This is why support to the tourism sector in consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic remains a key action, not only from the macroeconomic perspective of individual countries, but also in terms of the tourism economy of the European Union as a whole (in the macro- and mezzo-economic perspective). Cooperation on EU level will enable the sector exit from the current crisis which is definitely the most painful and severe crisis faced by European and international tourism. That also requires solidarity, as no country alone is able to deal with its effects (European Council of the European Union, 2020).

In their programmes for supporting the tourism sector in connection with the coronavirus, member states ought to consider:

- epidemiological criteria, including in particular those focusing on the areas in which the situation is improving, based on guidelines of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and using the regional map developed by the ECDC,
- ability to apply measures aimed at limiting spread of the virus throughout the trip, also at border crossings, including additional precautions and measures where physical distance may be difficult to ensure,
- economic and social aspects, initially treating cross-border traffic in key areas of activity, including for personal reasons, as a priority.

The risk management instruments in the tourism sector (being implemented or planned for implementation) discussed in the article provide a response to negative consequences of the materialised epidemic risk and are, above all, aimed at mitigating them. In their social and economic dimension, the instruments developed are expected to exercise both short-term impact onto the tourism sector (for example, by leading to improved financial liquidity, activation of jobs, etc.) and long-term impact (maintenance of tourism infrastructure). That is supposed to lead to restoring the position of the tourism sector in the EU, in particular in the countries which remain in strong economic dependence on this sector. The research question was confirmed, as the directions of action related to the tourism industry are appropriate for tourism and comply with EU bodies' guidelines, although in particular countries they had a different nature and scope, as well as a highly diversified degree of financial and operational involvement. That depended not only on the scale of economy and budgetary capabilities, but also on the importance of tourism in national economies, as well as perception and understanding of the role by management bodies and institutions.

Summing up, the first stage of post-crisis recovery will be dominated by national and intra-EU tourism. If a creative approach is pursued, once travelling limitations are abolished, the crisis may be an opportunity allowing Europeans take advantage

of the rich diversity of culture and nature in their own country or in other EU countries, and discover new experiences all year round. Many European regions and cities are in fact highly dependent on cultural tourism. During the current pandemic, technology has helped rediscover cultural tourism, opening new possibilities of creative expansion and extending the circle of recipients. The importance of coastal, marine and inland tourism has grown, as well as that of rural tourism. Thus, the global crisis ought to lead to transformation of tourism throughout the EU, preparing for a more sustainable and digital tourism ecosystem of the future.

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