**UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PROJECT**

**No. KP-06-H 35/11 of December 18, 2019**

**for financing a research project in the Fundamental Research Funding Contest – 2019**

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| **Project title**: Development of the tourist regions in Bulgaria by modeling innovative approaches in specialized types of tourism |
| **Coordinator of the research team**: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nikolay Tsonev, Department “Economics of tourism”*, UNWE* |
| Team members:  Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Kirilova Ianeva  Assoc. Prof. Dr. Asya Dimitrova Pandzherova  Chief Assist. Dr. Svetoslav Mateev Kaleychev  Chief Assist. Dr. Margarita Lyudmilova Misheva  Assistant Dr. Nikola Dragomirov Gaydarov  PD Veselina Mihaylova Portarska  PS Ralitsa Valentinova Georgieva  PS Stiliyana Dimitrova Basmadzhieva |

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| **Scientific cooperation with other organizations:** NBU, Department of Economics and Business Administration, Tourism Section |
| **Project period**: 2019/2022 |
| The modern tourism industry is evolving in an extremely dynamic and competitive environment, determining the need to create and implement strategic activities and coordination initiatives among all market players in order to establish positions and reputation on the world tourism map. The European Union is following these trends and has not accidentally identified as a priority in its policy the preservation of its position as a leading tourist destination in the world.  Bulgaria as an EU Member and one of the leading tourist destinations in Southeast Europe, developed the "Tourism zoning concept of Bulgaria" in 2014 to be used for the marketing of destinations at regional level and at the same time to be the basis for the formation of destination management organizations (tourist area management organizations). This concept is enshrined in the priorities of the Ministry of Tourism.  In connection with the priority area in terms of tourism development in Bulgaria, namely the development of newly created tourist regions, it is necessary to conduct research on the development of tourist regions, by modelling innovative approaches in specialized types of tourism. As the provisions of the Law on Tourism define future areas as marketing tourist areas, the management of which is related mainly to the implementation of marketing activities for the development, management and promotion of tourism products and services.  The specialized tourism products (selected part of them) that will be the subject of this study are considered as a prerequisite and opportunity for the development of some specialized types of tourism, positioning the country on the international market as a competitive destination. These include health, business, entertainment and leisure products (such as urban entertainment and shopping, gambling, luxury and creative) and cruise tourism.  The formulated and proposed research is very significant as there is no national survey of tourist regions including an analysis of their tourism development by some specialized types of tourism, as well as adapted models used by the Marketing Organizations of Destinations (MODs) applied in developed tourist countries. Also, criteria for the study and evaluation of the product supply in tourist regions, considering proposing an increase of the competitiveness of products, based on identified best practices from the observed leading tourist regions in Europe. This will increase the competitiveness index of Bulgaria, as well as its adequately positioning and promotion as a tourist destination. |