**Successfully completed IPA 2016 National Project “Developing efficient and sustainable statistical system in line with European Statistical System”**

The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia has successfully implemented a three-year project “Developing efficient and sustainable statistical system in line with European Statistical System”, worth EUR 1.2 million, completely funded by the European Union.

The cooperation with the EU on harmonizing the statistical system of the Republic of Serbia with the international standards, which began in 2009, continued through this Project, aimed at improving the national tourism accounts and statistics.

“The European Union IPA projects of support to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia represent the main driving force and instrument for the development and promotion of our Office, which in this respect is a leader in the region and among the candidate countries. The continuous support and empowerment we receive from our partners from the European Union and Eurostat enable us to quickly reach and master standards and quality of the statistical systems of developed European countries”, says Dušan Gavrilović, Assistant Director of the RSZ Department for National Accounts, Prices and Agriculture.

The survey of 5,000 foreign tourists in the Republic of Serbia conducted as a part of the Project, significantly promotes the tourism statistics. Because of this research, the first of its kind in the last 15 years, we are able to answer the key questions: who the foreign tourists who visit the Republic of Serbia are, where they come from, for what reason, how long they stay, how much money they spend, what they highlight as advantages, and what as disadvantages of tourism in Serbia.

“The survey gives us the basis for drafting the tourism policy in the Republic of Serbia. It provides us with a tool for managing the development of tourism in the country. It also provides the basis for drafting of strategic documents for the development of tourism. On the other hand, it gives us a tool for monitoring tourist activity in the country, and the efficiency of tourist activity”, emphasizes Zrinka Marušić, the Project’s key expert for tourism statistics.

The profile of the average foreign tourist was created based on this survey: he/she is 41 years old, employed or an entrepreneur, travels alone or accompanied by a partner, has visited the Republic of Serbia more than three times or for the first time, spends a total of five nights and spends EUR 90 per day.

As the survey was conducted during the 2021 coronavirus pandemic, it was important to establish whether COVID-19 impacted their decision to visit Serbia. Most of respondents – 72% – pointed out that it had no impact, while only 15% stated that they did not initially plan a trip to Serbia.

The tourists highly rated personal safety (95%), hospitality of the local population (94%), atmosphere (92%) and gastronomic offer (91%), value for money (91%), beauty of nature and landscape (91%) and accommodation facilities (90%), both in terms of comfort and quality of service.

Among the things that need to be improved, in terms of the overall tourist offer, they singled out: organized trips or excursions to tourist destinations, services of local guides, quality of medical services, child-friendly offers, availability of tourist destinations – local public transport, lack of pedestrian and bike paths, lack of adaptation for people with special needs, and maintenance of destinations (cleanliness and environmental preservation of places).

IPA 2016 Project also enabled significant improvements in methods and data sources for input-output statistics, regional accounts and state finance statistics.

A survey was conducted with 10,000 representatives of small and micro enterprises, the aim of which was to collect economic data on input-output statistics, and at the same time, economic indicators at the municipal and regional levels have been identified, aimed at responding to the increasing demand for more detailed regional economy growth indicators. This Project component is the starting point for the future development of regional accounts.

Dušan Gavrilović, Assistant Director of the RSZ Department for National Accounts, Prices and Agriculture, emphasizes: “The assistance we receive from the European Union through IPA projects enables us to permanently raise the quality of national accounts and economic statistics. IPA projects enable us to adopt advanced methods, knowledge and skills and cooperate with renowned European experts. Our strategic goal is full compliance and integration into the European Statistical System, and in this respect IPA projects and the support of the European Union are vital.”

The “Developing efficient and sustainable statistical system in line with European Statistical System” Project was implemented from September 2019 till June 2022.