

Western Balkans in a wider context

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General geographical overview of the area

- Origin of the term "Western Balkans"
- Geographical position and traffic corridors
- Problems (political, economic, social)
- Natural potentials
- Opportunities for cooperation in scientific and applied research

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Origin of the term

Post-WW2 period: cold war division, two blocks

> Western and Eastern Europe

During 1990s and early 2000s (together with Romania and Bulgaria):

> South-Eastern Europe

After 2007 (Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU):

> Western Balkans

Definition is rather political than geographical

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Origin of the term



Western Balkan
countries

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Origin of the term

Future of the term "Western Balkans":

> Further differentiation among the WB countries, as a consequence of different phases of their integration into the EU, will lead to gradual abandoning of the term

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Origin of the term



Political map
of the
Western Balkan
countries

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Geographical position

Geographical position

A peninsula of the European continent,
jutting into the Mediterranean Sea



Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Geographical position

Geographically, the peninsula is considered to cover the area south from the Danube and Sava Rivers



Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Geographical position

Main structural and physiographical units



Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Geographical position

Pan-European Corridors crossing the Western Balkans



Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Geographical position

Pan-European Corridors crossing the Western Balkans



Potentials for Territorial Co-operation with Western Balkans; Maribor, Slovenia, 19th-20th April 2010

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Geographical position

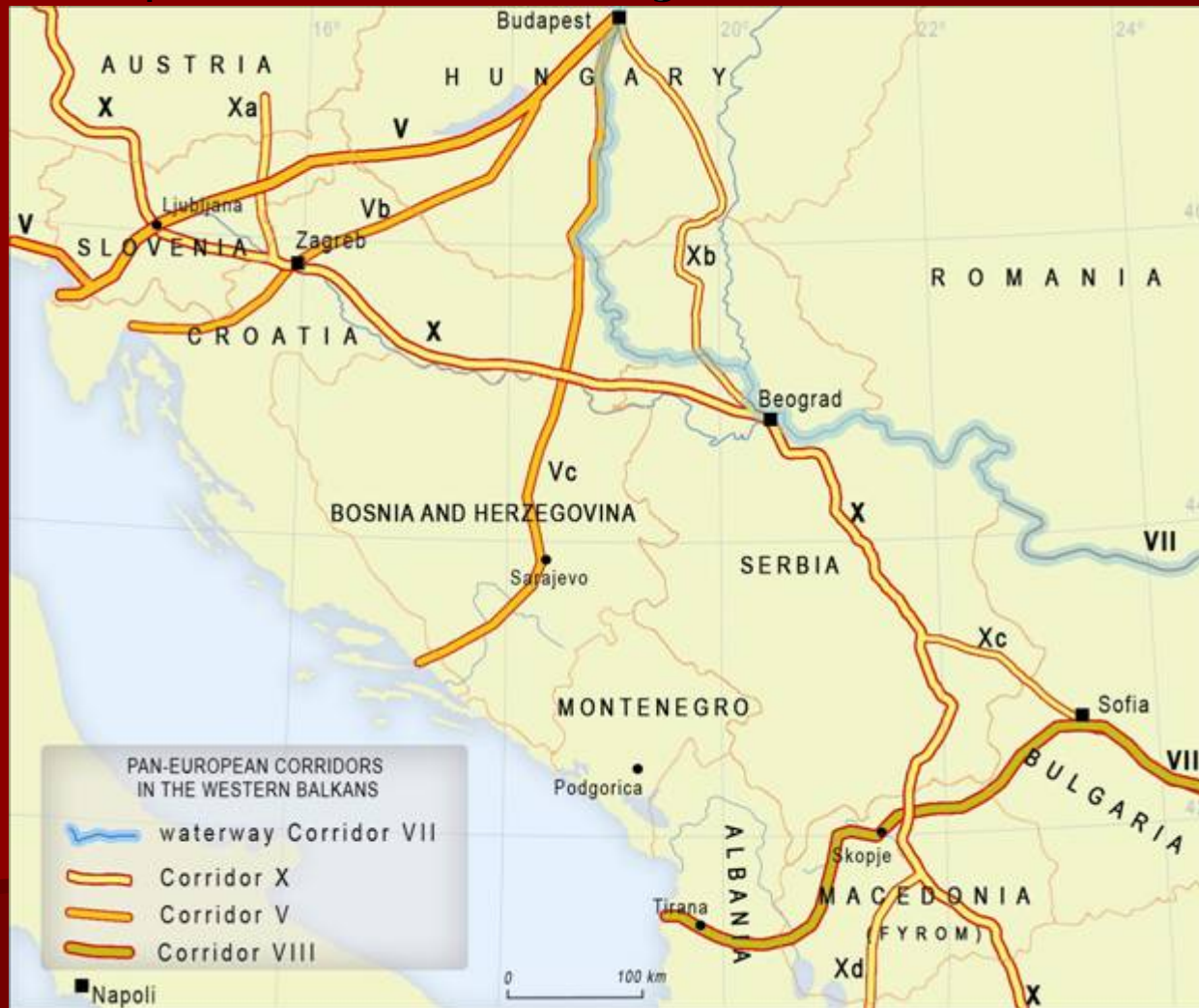
Pan-European Corridors crossing the Western Balkans



Potentials for Territorial Co-operation with Western Balkans; Maribor, Slovenia, 19th-20th April 2010

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Geographical position

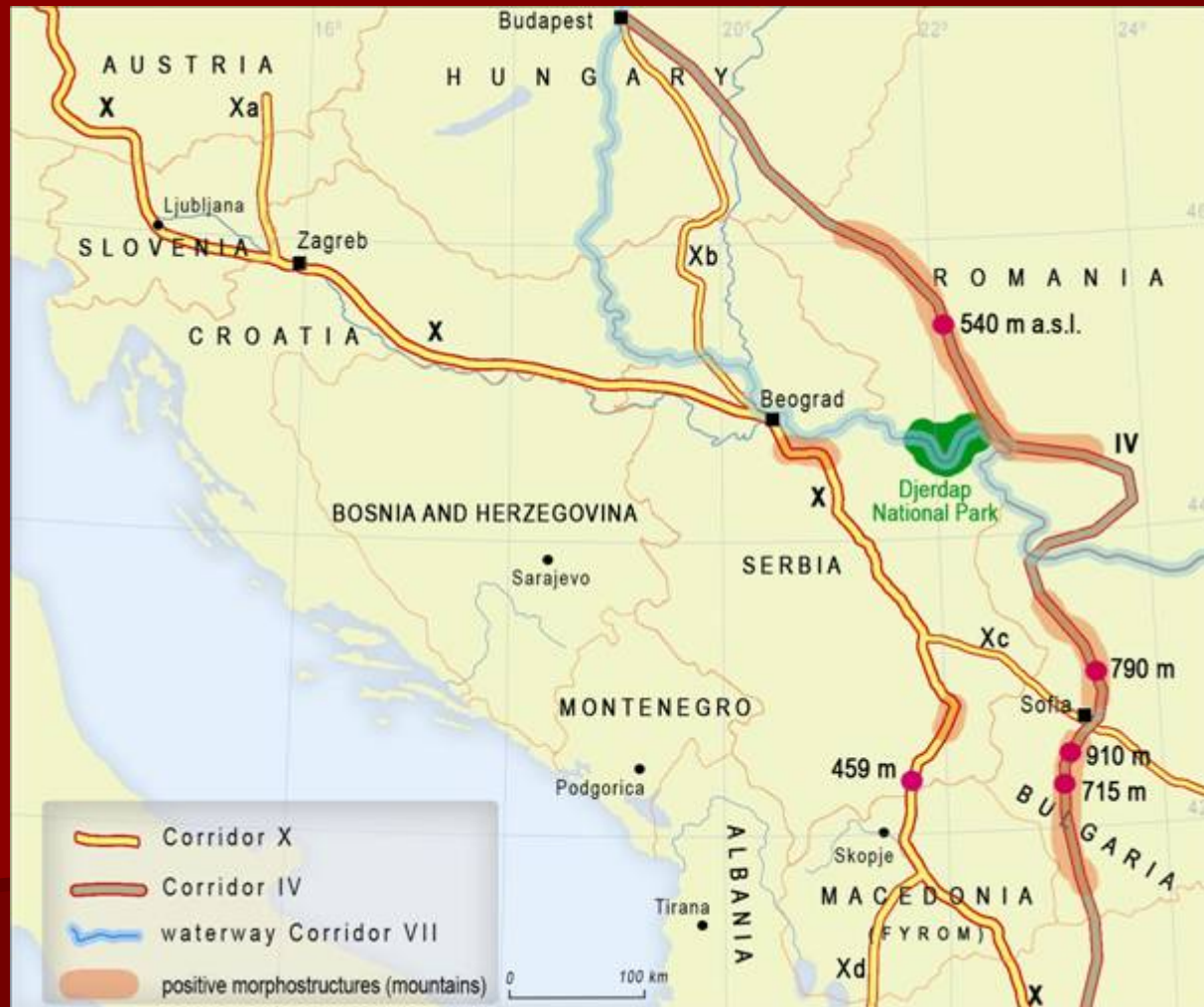
Pan-European Corridors crossing the Western Balkans



Potentials for Territorial Co-operation with Western Balkans; Maribor, Slovenia, 19th-20th April 2010

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Geographical position

A segment of the Corridor IV is actually an alternative to the southern part of the Corridor X.



Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Selected Problems

- Poor internal cohesion
- Development imbalances
- Diverse legislation
- Insufficiently coordinated risk management
- Population age structure disparities
- Rural depopulation

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Selected problems

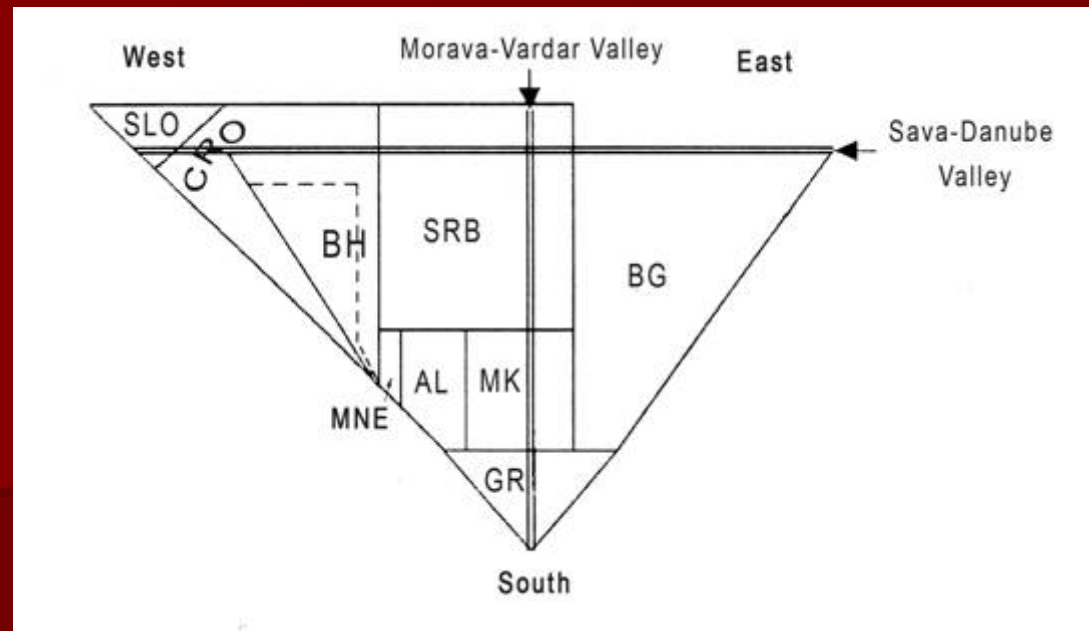
Poor internal cohesion among the Western Balkan countries

- Much more interested in cooperation with the EU than in cooperation among themselves
- Socially and economically fragmented region
- Conglomerate of small national countries and ethnical cultures
- Derrogatory phrase "Balkanization"

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Selected problems

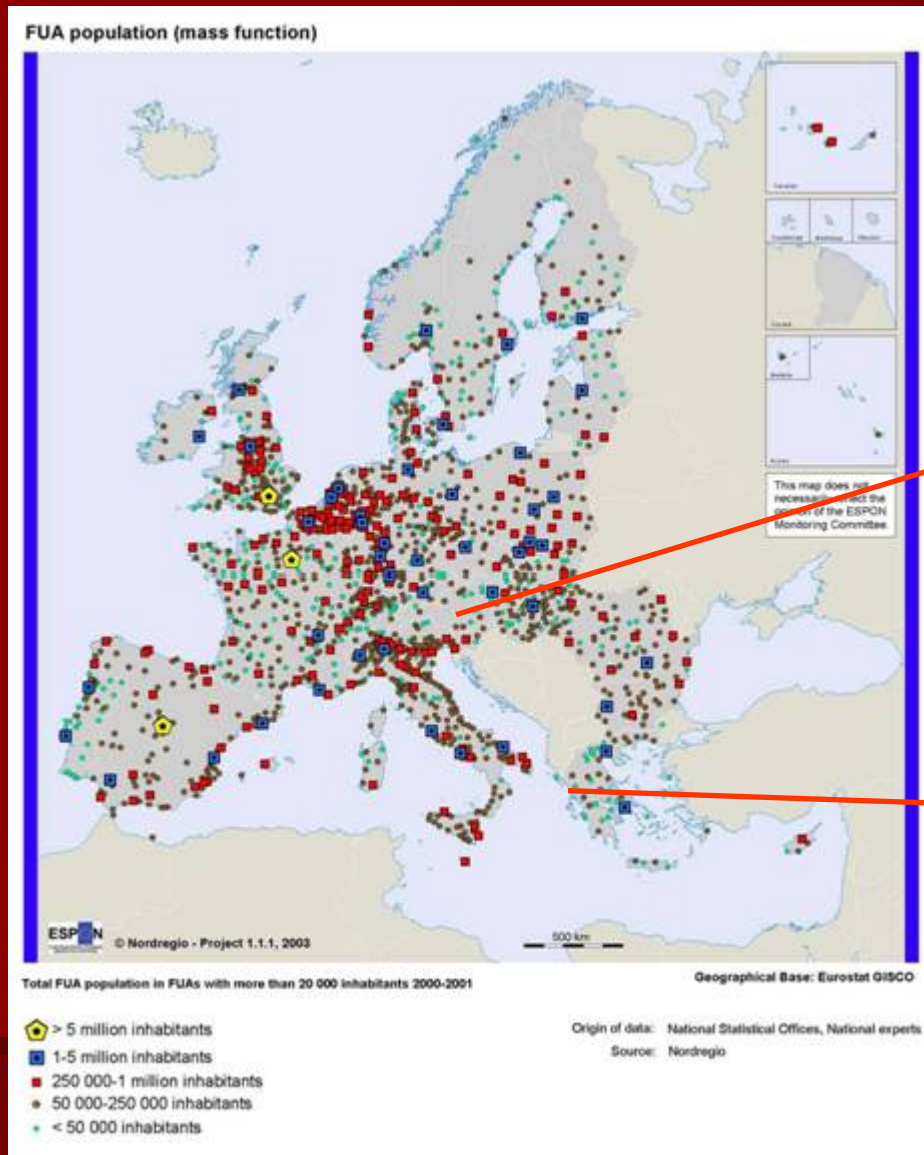
Development imbalances

- development imbalances are a combination of natural conditions and the impact of borders
- urban centres concentrated along linear development axes



Schematic view of the Balkan Peninsula, with the dominant linear axes (Grčić, 2001)

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Selected problems



ESPON, Project 1.1.1

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Selected problems



PlaNNet CenSE, 2006

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Selected problems

Development imbalances

-the need for application of the *concept of polycentricity*

Smaller towns are having similar problems in the whole area
(poor infrastructure, communal problems, emigration)

Among the two aspects of polycentricity, improvement of **relations**
(networks of flow and cooperation) is supposed to trigger the improvement
of **morphology** (distribution of urban areas).

> To share and spread the programs with good solutions, instead of trying
"individual experiments"

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Selected problems

Development imbalances

Cross border regions
are one of the ways:

- Development balancing
- Changing of border character
- Cooperation "from below"

Selected Euroregions in the
Western Balkan countries



Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Selected problems

Diverse legislations

- coordination with the EU standards has started but is far from being finished
- better situation in the countries having the EU-candidate status (Croatia, Macedonia)

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Selected problems

Risk management

-Insufficient coordination among the countries, various ways of internal organization and legislation in this field

-Natural hazards do not recognize political borders!

Positive examples:

-DPPI (Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South-Eastern Europe), functioning within the Stability Pact for SEE

-Agreement on natural hazards mitigation, signed among Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro (2009)

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Selected problems

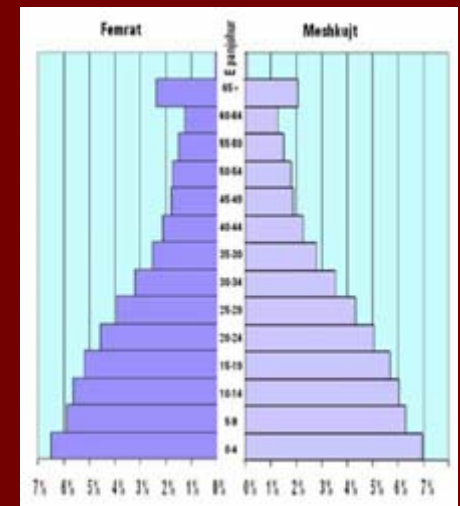
Population age structure disparities

- Population ageing takes place in major part of the area
- Growth rates either negative or slightly positive with a decreasing trend
- However, in some regions the population growth rates are extremely high; e.g. in the area of Kosovo

Two kinds of demographic pressure:

- On the public pension system (negative growth rates)
- On the labour market (extremely high growth rates)

Population pyramid for Kosovo
(Nushi, 2008)



Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Selected problems

Population structure

-some areas are not covered with up-to-date population censuses (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo)

> no data for the proper scientific or planning analyses, just estimations

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Selected problems

Rural depopulation

-Takes place in major part of the area

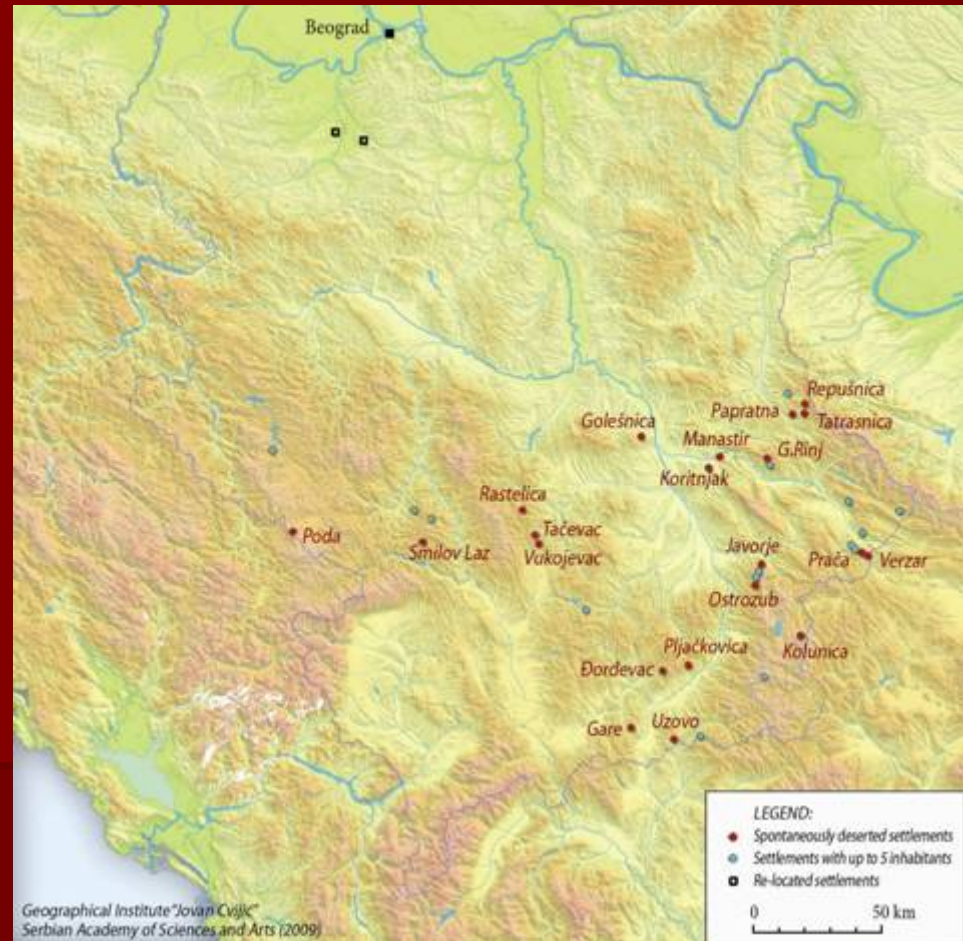
Example from Serbia

-extreme morphological isolation of depopulated villages

-revitalization is not an option (poor cost/benefit relation)

-re-utilization?

Depopulated villages
in southern and
south-eastern Serbia



Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Natural potentials

Natural potentials

- Considerable share of ecologically preserved areas, due to low degree of development
- Protected areas (national parks)
- Threats of poor legislation: example of the Vjetrenica Cave
- Touristic zones

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Natural potentials

Ecologically preserved soils

Extract from the Planning Strategy of Croatia (1997):

Areas of preserved biosphere.
Ecologically preserved soils marked in grey colour.

Strategija i Program prostornog uređenja Republike Hrvatske

MINISTARSTVO PROSTORNOG UREĐENJA, GRADITELJSTVA I STANOVANJA
Zavod za prostorno planiranje

3. Poglavlje:
Osnove za planiranje i usklađivanje prostornog razvoja
Sektor:
Područja osobitih vrijednosti i problemska područja
Tema:

Područja očuvane biosfere i osobitih vrijednosti prostora

Kompleksni programi jedinstvenih kriterija zaštite prostora i okoliša

Godina podataka - stanje i planirano:

1995. i 2005.

Izvori podataka:
Nekoliko političkih studija izrađenih za Strategiju prostornog uređenja, 1995.

Kartografski prikaz:

30-01

Zagreb, svnja 1997.



Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Natural potentials

Ecologically preserved soils

Traditional agriculture in the
Dinaric area.

Fragmented arable land has
helped in prevention of pollution.



Photo: J. Čalić

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Natural potentials

Protected areas

- in most countries, the surface of the protected areas is below the European standard of 10% of total territory
- Albania is a positive exception, with 13% of protected areas (14 national parks!)



National Parks in WB countries

Note: National Parks of Albania are not graphically presented, due to their large number and small scale of the map.

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Natural potentials

Biodiversity

- In almost all WB countries, the official planning documents claim an "exceptional biodiversity"
- A variety of habitats: from Mediterranean, to Alpine (in high mountain areas)

Example:

About 20% of Montenegrin flora is represented by endemic and sub-endemic species. 415 plant species and 430 animal species are protected by law.

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Natural potentials

Consequences of poor legislation

-Federation Bosnia-Herzegovina (one of the two entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina) has an insufficiently effective legislation on nature protection

-no national parks

-example of the Vjetrenica Cave:
the World's leading cave in underground biodiversity
is seriously threatened due to improper legislation



Photos: D. Bakšić

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Natural potentials

Touristic zones

- promotion of alternative tourism: eco, rural, adventure
- example of a cross-border zone: Dubrovnik + Popovo polje
(exceptional cultural and natural values combined)

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Natural potentials



Photo: J. Čalić

Sjeverni Velebit National Park, Croatia

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Natural potentials



Photos: M. Milivojević

Sutjeska National Park, Bosnia and Herzegovina (RS)

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Natural potentials



Tara National Park, Serbia



Photos: J. Čalić

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Natural potentials



Photo: J. Čalić

Lovćen National Park, Montenegro

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Natural potentials



Photo: M. Miliivojević

Mavrovo National Park, Macedonia

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Natural potentials



Photo: M. Milivojević

Valbona Valley National Park, Albania

Western Balkans in a Wider Context – Opportunities for cooperation

Opportunities for cooperation in scientific and applied research

- Earth sciences (geology, physical geography, biogeography) – many areas are insufficiently basically studied
- Social sciences (sociology, psychology, linguistics, ethnology)
- Spatial planning, and spatially oriented economic branches

