

V4DIS 2021 – **eTourism**

V4DIS

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Video conference V4DIS 2021 – eTourism

Conference V4DIS focused on the state and development of eGovernment in the V4 countries has been already for two decades a traditional companion of its bigger and older sister, an April international conference ISSS in Hradec Králové. Same as last year, this year overall safety situation did not favour organization of mass full-time events and that is why the organizers moved their activities into an online space.

This year topic was eTourism in all its aspects and speakers either distantly online connected or present online within smaller discussions and interviews in the studio, commented especially on current situation and its impacts on the whole segment of touristic services with respect to general digitalization of society. Auspices of the video conference was given by the President of the Senate of the Parliament of CR, Miloš Vystrčil and he also made an opening speech. One of the key speeches was given in the form of an interview with Jan Pokorný by director of CzechTourism Agency, Jan Herget.

The speakers commented especially on steps they made within their activity considering expected recovery of tourism and how they were motivated by more challenging demands of tourists on digital promotion of destinations, possibility of online tours, bookings etc. This higher pressure should lead according to the segment to modernization of tourist portals and webs or reorganization of existing perception of various client events or bonuses. Issue of accessibility (not only) of tourist information in the online space for the blind and the purblind was presented by an IT specialist for web accessibility Jan Šnyrych, who within the video speech also presented a practical display of using inclusive technologies.

In the course of about two tens of speeches there was evaluated also international and crossborder collaboration in the e-tourism area within the whole Visegrád region, and that is both from the point of view of coordination of national as well as regional procedures and events and in

the field of financing these projects either from national or European sources. "Czech-Polish" discussion on crossborder collaboration was shared by director of Czech Convention Bureau Tereza Matějková, Anna Zabska, director of Walbrzych regional tourist agency, Tomáš Míčka, head of project Discover Poland/Discover Czechia and Bartosz Powiecki, marketing director of network of hotels in Polish part of Giant Mountains.

Apart from discussions and contributions of deputies from public administration of V4 there was significant topic of presentation of best practices in the segment of tourism or presentation of best websites that regularly participate in the competitions Golden Crest (CR), Golden Crest.sk (Zlatyerb.sk) (Slovakia) or other lists that concern the most modern ICT technologies in tourism such as awards for "the best tourist product of "Polish-Czech borderland", or "the best service in the tourism in Polish-Czech borderland", which are announced at the Congress of Polish-Czech tourism in Swidnice. Some local examples of best practices were presented by the manager of the Golden Crest competition Jitka Hajžmanová and the deputy mayor of the township Karlštejn Janis Sidovský. The video conference was contributed to by other representatives with whom the V4DIS platform has worked for a long time such as the cities Trenčín, Kežmarok (SK) or Karcag (Hu).



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Opening interview with **Miloš Vystrčil**, President of the Senate of the Parliament of CR

Jan Pokorný, presenter of the V4DIS conference: Good morning.

Let me welcome you after some time in this peculiar online world, but at this beautiful place we will talk at the conference V4DIS. Finally, will many of us say. And the same may say even here present in person President of the Senate of CR, Miloš Vystrčil, from the Civic Democratic Party.

Good morning, Mr. President.

MV: Good morning and thank you for invitation.

JP: You have a unique chance to open this conference V4DIS. What do you think the Visegrad 4 countries got learned from the pandemic in the field of ICT, electronization of public administration?

MV: On the one hand it has taught us to communicate at a distance, which we also regularly learn at any V4DIS conference, and on the other hand I dare say it has taught us also solidarity and humility, because it turned out that a man is not the strongest in the world after all and that is even if we have various information technologies at our disposal. I think this is important to realize for our future.

JP: The pandemic has also got us unlearn something; we may have unlearned to travel a bit. You have indicated it. Do you think that ICT can help to develop tourism once more when it is possible?

MV: You are right that we have unlearned to travel in person and what is today a goal within V4 as well, is to start to travel more in an electronic way so that we would be able to travel in person once again. In this way I think that it is exactly

the V4DIS project that helps it very much and not only considering tourism in a way of holiday travelling, but also in a way of holding various conferences. Well, I believe that in 2022 we all from V4 will meet again at our conference ISSS/V4DIS in Hradec Králové and I am looking forward to it. It means that certainly electronic communication helps to develop tourism within the whole EU and if V4 countries take the lead, it will be only good.

JP: You say if V4 take the lead, it will be good, V4 it is Czechia, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia. How can these states inspire each other considering this segment?

MV: They can inspire each other in a way that they can learn from each other and at the same time even more than inspiration it is good to be some common force that will integrate more into Europe, we will be more aware that we are part of EU and today we should not only ask from EU, but we can also give. And that is our experience, that may be also our sights, these are our things that we acquired in the course of our history that is not shared by Western countries, which are less afraid of some things than us. And this I see as great contribution of V4 to the whole EU. If we can show our nature, our sights and at the same time also our historical experience related to some not such a distant period.



Part of the declaration of **Ján Ferenčák**, lord mayor of the City of Kežmarok

European foreign policy is very significant for Slovakia, we are related with V4 countries by same desires and same goals to improve quality of lives of our citizens. Hard times make us search for new opportunities and V4 is for the regions the best helping way for development, especially experience, common investment, and mutual inspiration between members of V4 give a useful content to the municipalities. Many times, we bring solutions already proven at other neighbouring countries. In Kežmarok our basic concept is to build a modern, dynamic and historic city. We were given an award EnviroCity 2019 for flood control measures and a cycling route. In 2020 we managed as first in Slovakia to modernize cycling route infrastructure by building 5 bicycle stations and 15 bicycle stands. We improve living conditions of our citizens by investing into house reconstructions, house surround-

ings, disposal of environmental load and then by creating conditions for building new flats, we aim smart solutions at changing the town so that our citizens would like not only to live in it but so that they would feel good in it. But it would be impossible without effort to keep historical sights for other generations either without building

and updating approach towards environment. In the streets of historical centre, we implemented a free wifi connection, whereas the necessary investment we acquired from a European programme Wifi for EU aimed at improving quality of citizens lives and for support of regional tourism.



Karcag – best practices

Dear ladies, dear gentlemen,

Karcag city has been a traditional partner of the project V4DIS (Visegrad Four for Developing Information Society) already for many years and it has been glad to benefit from the cooperation with the conference platform as well as from other related activities. Tourism is an important part of economy of the whole country and of course of our city and surroundings as well. We try to use at most possibilities that are offered by modern ICT, and that is why we appreciate exchange of experience and best practices, especially in the field of tourism, and that is not only with project implementors, but also with other partners from the whole Visegrád region. In Karcag we can boast of a number of touristic attractivities, a rich offer of cultural activities,

modern industrial parks or by reopened and frequently visited spa Akáclliget.

In the past 15 months the coronavirus pandemic has disrupted close ties with other towns and states, it has affected tourism, gastronomy, and many other areas, but on the other hand it has taught us to communicate more efficiently, to use modern technologies and to solve various problems more actively. I firmly hope that the video-conference V4DIS 2021 – eTourism, similarly as some other events, will contribute significantly to recovery of tourism in this part of Europe.



Tibor Szepesi, lord mayor of Karcag city

Anna Żabska – experience from Poland

Presenter JP: Another pleasant guest here in the attic of Malostranská beseda, is **Anna Żabska, chairwoman of the Council of Walbrzych Tourism Committee**. Good afternoon.

AZ: Good afternoon.

JP: Do you think that such a conference as V4DIS makes sense in this time?

AZ: At first, I would like to thank for invitation to this conference, I must say that in the past time it has been first big international conference that is devoted to tourism. It is very beneficial, because we can share here experience, exchange

opinions, tell each other about preparations for future, how we face barriers, how we remove them, so I thank you very much for invitation.

JP: This conference deals every year with level of help of ICT in various fields, for example in tourism. What is your opinion?

AZ: In pandemic time, as for technologies, everything has gone much faster, it played a key role, without it, it would not be possible to survive, so thanks to technologies we managed to find some way to make operating easier, actually as I assumed, so it is at both Czech as well as Polish side, where the development and use of these technologies have actually accelerated.



Jiří Běhounek: How did the pandemic influence tourism?



Presenter JP: The man coming to another interview, is a man who has been present at the special gala openings may it have been at ISSS or at V4DIS conference, may it have been in the role of President of the Vysočina Region or in the role of a doctor or now in the role of **vice-chairman of the Committee on Health Care in the Chamber of Deputies, Jiří Běhounek**. Good morning.

JB: Good morning. Thank you for invitation.

JP: I am happy to see you, after a time, live.

JB: Well, live, otherwise we are always virtual.

JP: Tourism is another interesting topic related also to V4DIS conference. Travelling was always performed in person, not in an electronic form by finger across a map or across a virtual map. How does the pandemic influence tourism? And is it in a way a challenge?

JB: Well, I do not have national data, but as I can judge from

the regional level, there has been a few essential changes. Quite a significant individualisation of relevant needs of these individual users, who stay more at the spot, there has grown interest in local cottages and location in near surroundings. And of course, these who were used to it, they will welcome to know how to get for example to Slovakia to the Tatras or to Hungary to thermal spa and so on and in what way to do it, so nowadays 90%, at least that is what our department for regional development claims, book online. Which means an inquiry, electronic booking and then possibly go there, so even this has shifted the situation. Of course, there remains a question how the business in this field will survive and how it will be especially in the catering services, which is not sure yet.

Jan Herget – cooperation of V4 in promoting tourist destinations



Presenter JP: And another pleasant guest is **Jan Herget, director of Czech Tourism Agency**. Good morning.

JH: Good morning.

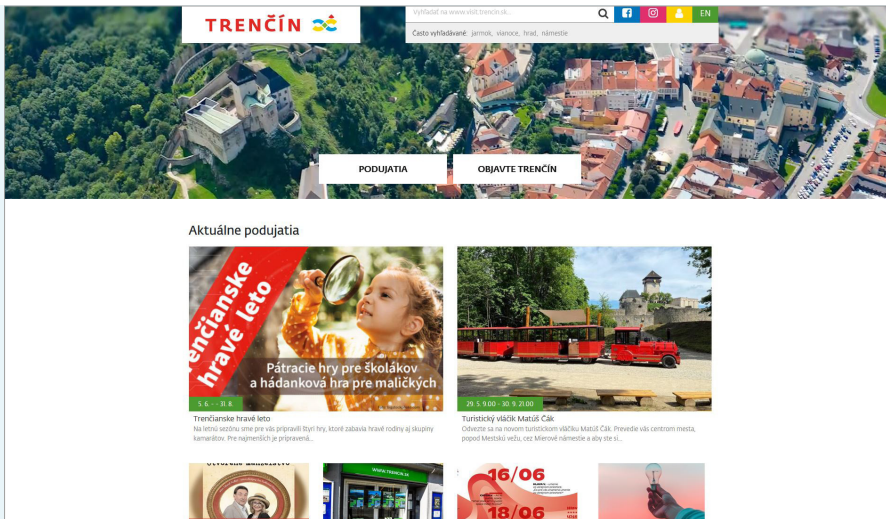
JP: Our interview is framed, Mr. Director, by cooperation within V4. How do you view it?



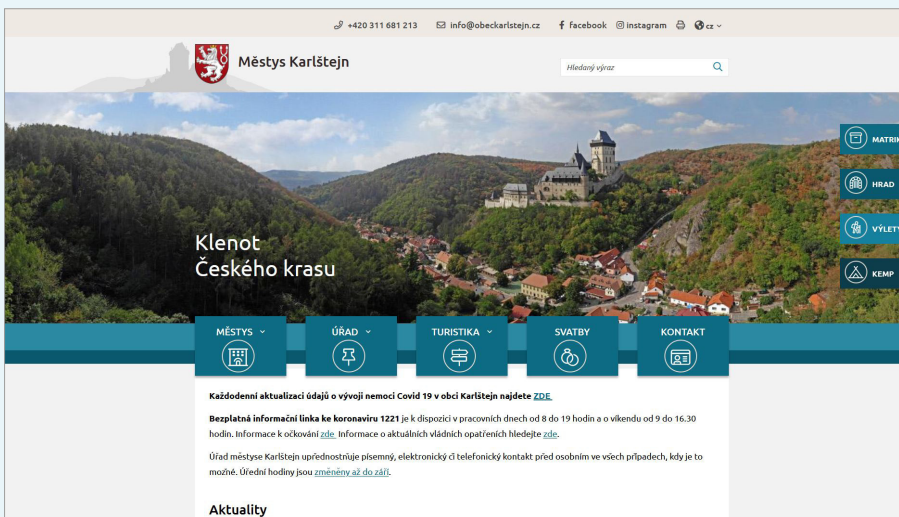
JH: V4, I do not want to comment on the political side, but anyway it makes sense in the way of tourism, mainly in the more distant markets, because the Czech republic itself, if it wanted to catch on in South Korea or Asia, it is hard work and of course if we collaborate with Poland, Hungary and Slovakia, suddenly we look like one big unit, it is the same as we do not travel to exotic destinations only to one concrete place, so the distant tourists visit the whole Europe, Eastern Europe, do not visit only Prague, do not visit only Krumlov, they visit all countries, so it makes sense. By coincidence we had last week so called high-level meeting, at which we approved of marketing plan for this year. I must say that due to coronavirus pandemic we made a few changes, and we quite significantly left out the mentioned Asia and we stay in the USA and Russia and concentrate on Europe, West Europe. Because this year there may be bigger potential.

JP: Just by the way, how significant can be the advantage of almost zero language barrier between Czechia and Slovakia at this cooperation?

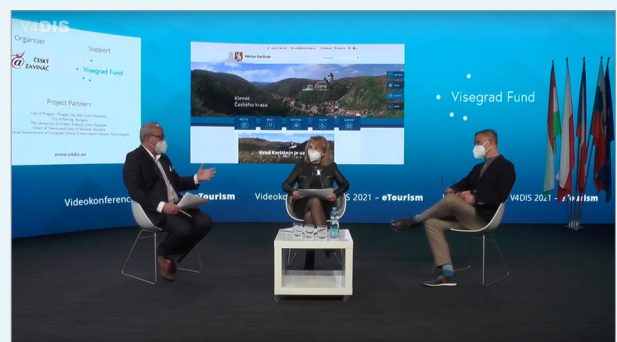
JH: We are definitely most natural partners, it makes sense, but on the other hand I must say that Prague is significantly more attractive dominant than for example Bratislava, in this Slovakia lags behind in comparison with other three countries in numbers, but I think on the contrary it is good for them, because we together drag them up and gradually we get at the same level.



“Web pages of Trenčín city have won in the competition GoldenCrest.sk already for a few times,” say Radoslav Jánoš, webmaster of the web pages www.trencin.sk and www.visit.trencin.sk and Janka Sedláčková, head of the Department of Cultural Information Services of Trenčín city.



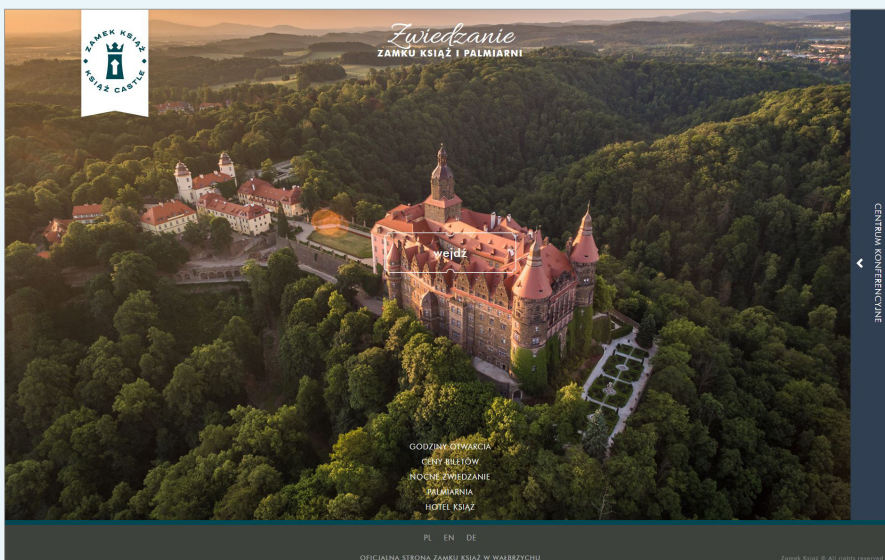
“I consider web pages to be one of the most important tools of communication and that is both with local citizens and with numerous tourists, as there annually arrives here up to half million of them,” claims deputy mayor of the township Karlštejn, Janis Sidovský. “We also set up social networks, we use Facebook and Instagram and they provide for us also feedback from the visitors to Karlštejn.”





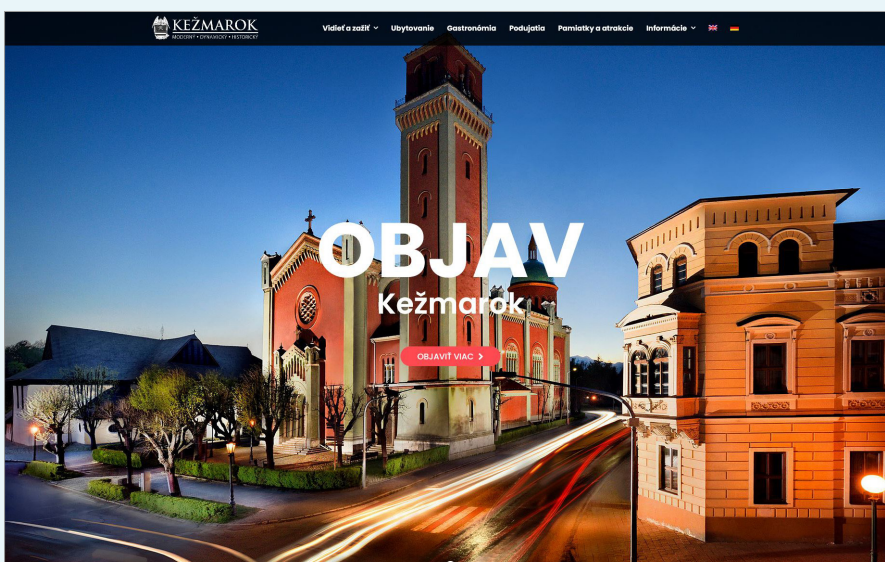
„We spend a great deal of time showing our settlement so that the visitors, the people who live here enjoy themselves and receive all the information, all the information that gives them their everyday life, their stay here, the city’s past, present and, of course, its future.”

Tibor Szepesi,
lord mayor of the City of Karcag



“Książ castle is the third largest castle in Poland, prior to the pandemic it was visited annually by about half million of tourists, 10% of whom came from the Czech Republic. At present there are ongoing a few crossborder projects in tourism, our partners from CR are the Broumov region and Kuks castle.”

Anna Żabska, CEO of the castle
Książ in Walbrzych



„In line with the city concept new technologies have been gradually implemented into all life areas and city investments.”

Ján Ferenčák, lord mayor
of the City of Kežmarok



Czech-Polish cooperation – eTourism and marketing

Within the video conference V4DIS 2021 – eTourism Tomáš Míčka introduced a project Discover Czechia (Odkryj Czechy), which promotes Czech “attractivities” in Poland, and as such mostly nature attractivities, restaurants, hotels and boarding houses, towns and some shops... The project aims at better visibility of a concrete location in Poland, but also in CR and at providing interesting information to tourists. On the other hand the project Discover Poland promotes Polish attractivities in Czechia.

„We must realize that if a Polish tourist comes from distant towns or from the seaside for example to the Polish Giant Mountains, he or she knows that they are near the Czech border,” says Tomáš Míčka. „But they have no idea that there are such towns as Špindlerův Mlýn and so on, not speaking about some local towns like Trutnov or Vrchlabí. A Czech goes shopping to Poland and does not know that he passes a spa town or a popular mountain resort.“

The project Discover Czechia (Odkryj Czechy) shows the tourist that within the reach of the border there are beautiful locations in CR with various possibilities of spending free time as well as staying overnight. And next time he or she will consider staying on the Czech side. Most clients have an average increase in Czech or Polish visitors by 2-5 times more every year, which means hundreds of percent.

A new approach

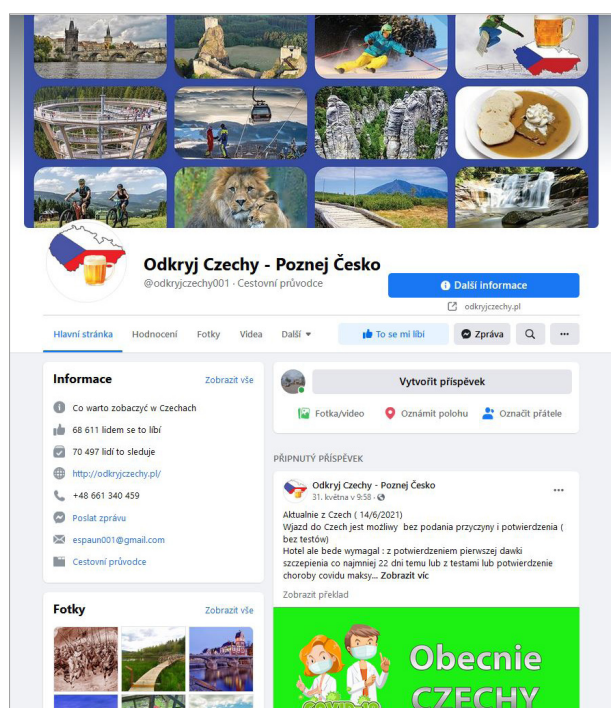
Generally, people must learn that there are these locations that is why we combine old and new marketing. Classic means include leaflets and maps (about 2 million a year),

banners by roads and at significant tourist places. New there are internet websites and social networks, exhibitions and fairs or participation in local events.

New marketing is certainly getting more to the forefront, but the old one cannot be stopped yet.

The project has about 100 000 followers on the social networks, with whom there continues communication during the whole day and that is about current topics in the country and at the same time there are promoted concrete tourist destinations. Combining marketing and targeted activities will arouse interest in region and tourists start with gradual discovering new regions.

The project creators have personal contacts with most of the owners, directors and managers in the area, which allows them to participate in negotiations on planning and new activities in the area. With individual representatives of the locations, whether they are mayors or tourism workers, we are working on projects of connecting the two worlds, because each side offers its advantages. The aim is to connect the Czech-Polish border and continue to promote locations of both countries.



Evaluation criteria of the competitions in the Czech republic and Slovakia

The competition Golden Crest aims at supporting modernization of local and regional public administration and self-government by developing ICT technologies and services, which are provided to the citizens via Internet and other electronic media and thus it can contribute to development of life quality in towns and municipalities, more efficient sharing of information or support of tourism. In connection with the current complicated situation, it is ever more important to use modern technologies, development of which is enhanced by competitions that enable to compare websites by certain criteria, they motivate to be better or provide mutual inspiration.

Golden Crest competition includes the Award of Minister

of Regional Development for the best tourist presentation, criteria of which were made up by a team of experts lead by Professor Josef Zelenka from the University of Hradec Králové. The jury consists of differently focused experts from the academic sphere, CzechTourism Agency and Ministry of Regional Development specialised in web technologies, web accessibility for the visually handicapped, social media, mobile applications etc. There are evaluated categories: regions/destination management, towns and municipalities (distinguishing towns and municipalities) or attractivities, the result is the average of the evaluation of all involved experts, who award points in the range of the scale 0–5.

An example of evaluation for the category destination management of the Golden Crest competition (CZ)



- Information quality with subcategories of language version, service database, event calendar, route itinerary (trip planner)
- Marketing quality with subcategories of product offer of CR, visitor segmentation and communication method
- Technology and interconnectedness with subcategories, link to social media and LBS, technology quality including way of their use and web accessibility for the visually handicapped.
- General evaluation of clarity and method of control: there is evaluated web clarity (colour balance, orientation on the web) and a method of control.
- General evaluation with subcategories, user friendliness and general impression.
- Existence and quality of professional web (at the category of destination management).
- Use of social media with subcategories activity, interest, scope of use (number of used social media and their language versions), content range and management quality, quality of technologies and their use, content quality.
- Use of mobile devices with subcategories quality of technologies including method of their use, range of offered applications and their language versions.

Results of the competition Golden Crest in 2020:

Golden Crest 2020 CZ – „Award of the Minister of Regional Development for the best tourist presentation“

Category towns, municipalities:

1. Official tourist portal of the town Mariánské Lázně (<https://www.marianskelazne.cz>)
2. Karlštejn (<https://www.mestys-karlstejn.cz>)
3. Tourist information centre of Brno city

Category land regions, regions:

1. Official tourist portal of the Pardubice region, East Bohemia (<https://www.vychodni-cechy.info>)
2. Tourist portal of Vysočina Region (<https://www.vysocina.eu>)
3. Portal of tourist area Beskydy-Valašsko (<https://www.beskydyportal.cz>)

Category of tourist attractivity:

1. Loučeň chateau (<https://www.zamekloucen.cz>)
2. Žířeč resort (<http://www.arealzirec.cz>)
3. Radyně castle (<https://www.hrad-radyne.cz>)

A special award of the Minister of Regional Development for the best tourist presentation on the web pages of municipality

Hrobčicko wanderings

(<https://www.hrobvice.cz/obec/toulky-hrobickem>)



Golden Crest 2020 Slovakia

The competition GoldenCrest.sk focuses on supporting informatization of Slovak municipalities, awarding exceptional projects, supporting exchange of experience and evaluating effort of representatives of municipalities to use information and communication technologies efficiently for improving quality and accessibility of services of self-governing regions, towns, town districts and municipalities. In contrary to a similar competition in the Czech Republic, information in the field of tourism is evaluated in all competitors using the following criteria:

Information in the field of tourism

- Facts about the region, town, town district or municipality
- History, sights
- Electronic version of the regional news
- Calendar of cultural, social and sport events
- Accommodation and catering capacities
- Geographic map services
- Traffic information
- Photo gallery, panorama photographs, electronic post-cards, video gallery
- Information in foreign languages



Results in 2020

Best website of towns and town districts

1. Trenčín (trencin.sk)
2. Nitra (nitra.sk)
3. Bratislava – Dúbravka (dubravka.sk)

Best website of self-governing region

1. Prešov region (po-kraj.sk)
2. Trenčian region (tsk.sk)
3. Košice region (web.vucke.sk)

Best website of municipality

1. Špačince (spacince.sk)
2. Jaslovské Bohunice (jaslovske-bohunice.sk)
2. Nitrianske Pravno (nitrianskepravno.sk)
3. Valča (obecvalca.sk)



In other Visegrad 4 countries there exist various regional competitions and lists that deal with use of most up-to-date ICT technologies in tourism such as awards “Best tourist product of Polish-Czech borderland”, or “Best service in the area of tourism in Polish-Czech borderland”, which are announced at the Congress of Polish-Czech tourism in Swidnice.

Discussion of experts within the video conference V4DIS 2021 – eTourism also offered a view on current trends in the development of electronization of tourism or comments on the area of marketing, graphic procedures etc. – we can name for example:

- New applications on websites – GIS, various forms of virtual sight-seeing, interconnectedness of mobile applications and web;

- Personalisation of web content;
- Brevity of basic communication, significant first impression, clarity, simplicity of search and orientation on the web;
- Social tourism, travelling of the handicapped and webs for the handicapped (especially visually ones);
- Development and changes of social media – changes of their significance for tourism, their use also for search of information, role at image creation and relation to the destination.

Virtually all speakers also agreed on the fact that it is necessary to keep developing actively electronic support of tourism and its promotion, for this way is much more efficient and cheaper than for example business trips to foreign fairs and at the same time it covers far wider target group.

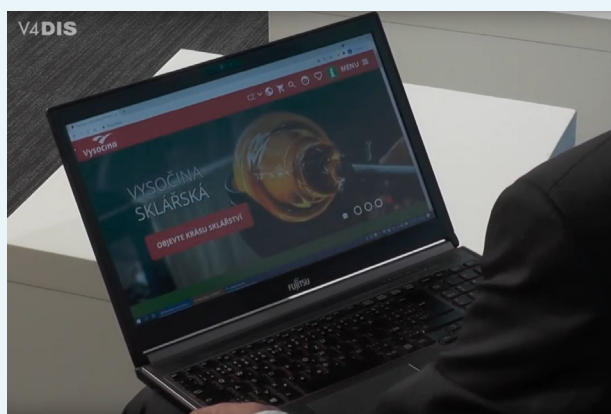
Websites for the **handicapped**

Jan Šnyrych, an IT specialist for accessibility of websites and mobile applications from the United Organization of the Blind and the Purlblind annually takes part in evaluation of the national round of Golden Crest, where he concentrates mainly on this issue.

„We must realize that accessibility of websites, and that is not only these in tourism, involves not only the visually handicapped, but also various other users with specific needs,” notes Jan Šnyrych. „One cannot usually say if a concrete website is fully accessible or fully inaccessible, it moves on a kind of scale between both poles. But most essentially, the situation on websites of public administration as well as tourist destinations keeps improving.“

Jan Šnyrych shows in the interview with moderator of the video conference V4DIS 2021 – eTourism Jan Pokorný a num-

ber of examples how keeping the structure of the website can help to use various kinds of software for focusing and also for better orientation on the websites and also how working with website can be managed also by even a fully blind, who uses software for loading content. It is important to define correctly for example headlines, clarity of the main content of the website or division into separate categories. If the website is well done, even a blind user, who cannot control the website using keyboard, can move here efficiently and look up information.



Congress tourism and its future

Discussion topics included congress tourism, e-tourism or generally problems of tourism in CR and in Slovakia. Jan Pokorný, the moderator, discussed with Lucie Kondáš, co-founder and manager of ITAPA conference, Jakub Janda, chairman of the Subcommittee for Tourism of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of CR and Tomáš Renčín, director of the conferences ISSS and V4DIS.

Presenter JP: Mr. MP, do you have any work at all as there is not much to do in the subcommittee for tourism thanks to Covid?

JJ: At present there is even more work. Just 14 days ago we had a meeting discussing fulfilment of the crisis plan in tourism. We have plenty of worries now as tourism is one of the most afflicted areas.

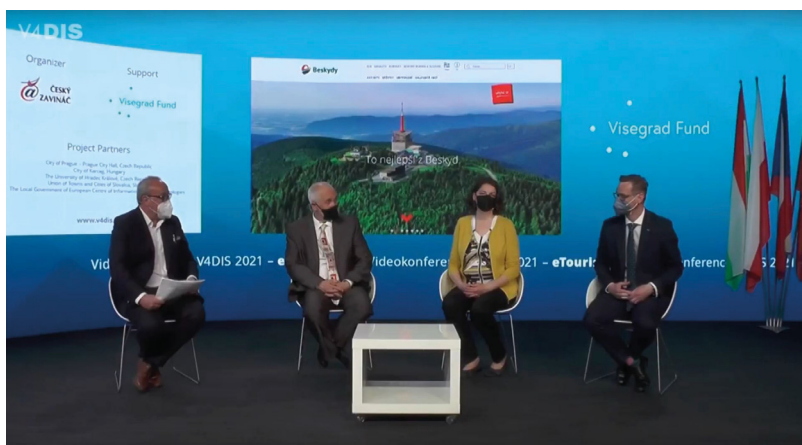
JP: Damages are being counted, deadlines are being changed – it can be confirmed by organizers of big events such as for example ITAPA in Slovakia... What did coronavirus take from you?

LK: Especially the feeling that we have a constant ongoing conference. ITAPA has already been held for 19 years, so you do not really expect that something could surprise you – this was definitely taken from us and it brought really a lot of challenges. Autumn congress was finally organized both online and in person, of course while keeping many restrictions and putting up with lot of continual changes.

TR: Coronavirus pandemic took us one year that was finally held later in autumn in a substituted online form. It took place in the studio, we learned many new things and as positive one can perceive a wider use of Internet and video conferences for broader audience. However, I still think that personal meeting at the conference is absolutely irreplaceable. It definitely turned out that modern technologies can bring new dimension in organizing such events.

JP: Mr. MP, what will your subcommittee deal with most in future?

JJ: We will definitely keep solving crisis in tourism, but I do not know how much we will manage till the end of the election period. We will deal with items concerning abandoning restrictions in tourism, it is still a bit neglected, hotels have big problems etc. We submit topics to the Ministry of Regional Development, how it should look like and how the restrictions should be dropped.



TR: I think that our Visegrad conference V4DIS that usually takes places simultaneously with the conference ISSS aims exactly at sharing various best practices from all V4 countries and at mutual inspiration.

JJ: I am glad that these events exist in an online form and we can continue with our work. But at the same time I believe that it was online for the last time and this year we will really meet. Internet is great, we can look up much information here, but without meeting in person it is not enough. Again we will be able to solve also problems, which cannot be solved without physical contact.

Organizer



Support



Project partners

City of Prague—Prague City Hall, Czech Republic

City of Karcag, Hungary

The University of Hradec Králové, Czech Republic

Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia, Slovakia

The Local Government of European Centre of Information Society Technologies